



JEEVADHARA

MERCY : THE SUBSTANCE OF THE GOSPEL OF JESUS

Edited by

Mathew Illathuparampil

PROCESSED

AN 06 2016

LIBRARY

Vol. XLV 2015

ISSN 0970 - 1125

No. 270

JEEVADHARA

is published every month
alternately in English and Malayalam

FOUNDER EDITOR

Joseph Constantine Manalel

ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Kuncheria Pathil

SECTION EDITORS

Social Concerns

Felix Wilfred

Sunny Maniyakupara

Word of God

Selva Rathinam

George Edayadiyil

The Living Christ

Jacob Parappally

Saji Mathew Kanayankal

Communion of People

Kuncheria Pathil

Tony Neelankavil

Harmony of Religions

Vincent Sekhar

Vincent Kundukulam

Fullness of Life

Mathew Illathuparampil

jijo Kurian Moolayil

Secretary

P.U. Abraham

jeevadharma

A JOURNAL FOR SOCIO-RELIGIOUS RESEARCH

Mercy: The Substance of the Gospel of Jesus

Edited by:

Mathew Illathuparampil

Malloossery P. O.,

Kottayam - 686 041

Kerala, India

Tel: (91) (481) 2392530, 2397017

Mob: 9495519775

E-mail: jcmanalel@gmail.com

Web: www.jeevadhara.org

CONTENTS

Editorial	5
<i>'The Face of Mercy'</i> and the Face of the Poor Reflections on the Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy	7
<i>John Nellikunnel</i>	
Scripture, Virtue, Ethics, and Public Life Justice and Mercy in Isaiah 42/Matthew 12	22
<i>Robert Gascoigne</i>	
Mirroring the Merciful God An Exploration of Kasper's Relational Ontology	38
<i>Randy J.C. Odchigue</i>	
God's <i>Hesed</i> in the Bible: Word, Action and Re-action	58
<i>Martin Antony</i>	
Indices	70

Editorial

The theme of Mercy calls for sustained theological reflections in view of two vital contemporary contexts: positively, the extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy proclaimed by Pope Francis, which commences on 8 December, 2015 and ends on 20 November, 2016. On a negative note, the growing incidents and socio-political policies of mercilessness around the globe, including the latest terrorist attack in Paris on 14 November, 2015 call for appropriation of mercy. In addition, the theme of mercy appeared as centrifugal virtue in discussions in the recent Synod on the Family which was on session from 4 to 25 October, 2015.

Mercy is the key aspect of Jesus' ministry and consequently the central function of the church. Jesus came to preach the good news to the poor (Lk 4:18). He not only preached; he enacted mercy in words deeds and promises to the poor and sinners. Mercy is to act as the lynchpin of the entire life of the church. Pope Francis says, "without mercy, our theology, our law, our pastoral care run the risk of collapsing into bureaucratic narrow-mindedness or ideology, which by their nature seeks to domesticate the mystery. Understanding theology is understanding God, who is love" (Letter to the Theological Faculty at the Catholic University of Argentina, on the occasion of its 100th Anniversary," March 3, 2015 (*L'Osservatore Romano*, March 13, 2015). In other words, mercy cannot be counted as just an optional pastoral attitude, but it is the very substance of the Gospel of Jesus.

Jesus projects mercy as the single principle of Christian life in the parable of merciful Samaritan (Lk 10:30-37): "There was a man going down from Jerusalem to Jericho who fell into the hands of robbers." A priest was going along that road and saw him, but passed by on the other side. Likewise a Levite saw the man and passed by on the other side. But when a Samaritan came along and saw the man, he was moved with compassion. He bent down in the dirt and dust, treated the wounds and wrapped them with bandages. Jesus then asked the Jewish teacher: "Which of the three made himself neighbor to the man, who fell

into the hands of the robbers?" The answer was correct: "The one who had mercy on him." And Jesus says: "Go then and do likewise."

Discussions on mercy often tend to prompt us to be on the giving end. Mercy is not merely the way we have to deal with others. It is exactly how God deals with us. God condescends in order to raise us up. He gives further chances and always promises new life and new hope. No one would be so self-righteous as to think that s/he would not need such mercy. It is as important to receive mercy from God as to give it to others. That means, the church is not only the agent of God's mercy, it is also the object of God's mercy. As sinners and people in various needs, we must be purified time and again and enforced by God's mercy, rather than rewarded for our merits. In other words, we must show mercy to ourselves by opening ourselves to receive God's mercy. Only a faith-community that has been empowered after having received God's mercy can give mercy meaningfully and in a saving manner to others.

That this issue of *Jeevadhara* discusses various aspects of mercy shows that we need to resist the temptation of reducing it to merely being "sorrowful at heart" which is the root meaning of the word mercy derived from the Latin word for mercy, *misericordia*. Thomas Aquinas affirms the definition of St. Augustine that "Mercy is heartfelt sympathy for another's distress, impelling us to succour him if we can" (*ST* II-II q. 30 art. 1). In his own words he states: "a man is said to be merciful, as being, so to speak, sorrowful at heart; being affected with sorrow at the misery of another as though it were his own. Hence it follows that he endeavours to dispel the misery of this other, as if it were his; and this is the effect of mercy" (*ST* I q. 21, art. 3).

It is not strange that Catholic theological tradition does not talk sufficiently about mercy, as it used to speak about God's justice. For, the classical concept of God sees God as perfect and unchanging. In fact, it has turned out to be a pastoral catastrophe. A God who is not understood as merciful will have little to do with the situation of the world. Therefore, we need a new dogmatic theology of divine mercy to allow mercy to assume its proper place. This issue of *Jeevadhara* is a humble attempt towards this goal, approaching mercy from four relevant perspectives.

Mathew Illathuparampil
Mangalapuzha, Aluva -683 102

***'The Face of Mercy'* and the Face of the Poor**

Reflections on the Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy

John Nellikunnel

Pope Francis formally announced the jubilee year with The Bull of Indiction: *Misericordiae Vultus* read during the vespers of Divine Mercy Saturday on April 11, 2015. The article by John Nellikunnel, professor of Philosophy at St. Joseph Pontifical Seminary, Mangalapuzha, Aluva, makes an interpretive reading of this much discussed document *Misericordiae Vultus*. He does it by focusing on the concerns and claims of the poor as indicated in this papal text. In this attempt, he links the conclusions and proposals of *Misericordiae Vultus* with those of Vatican II and recent popes.

Introduction

We are living in a world where humanity faces serious challenges and threats. It is a world where hatred and the desire for revenge dominate, where innocent people suffer, where the wealthy and the powerful thrive at the cost of the poor. In the world economic forum, met in Davos, Oxfam made a startling observation: more than half of the global wealth is enjoyed by 1% of the total population.¹ The growing secularization of faith and aggressive individualism which argue for a liberal society, crisis of faith in the affluent nations, IS militants' cruelty in the Middle East, the growing problems of refugees and human trafficking in the midst of the tragic life and death dramas, increasing disparity of income and the spread of poverty, the threat to ecosystem,

¹ Cf. *Oxfam International*, 'Wealth: Having it all and wanting more', published on 19 January, 2015, available from <http://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/wealth-having-it-all-and-wanting-more-338125>, accessed on 01.05.2015.

scandals shaking the credibility of priests and religious institutions, are serious issues of grave concern. It is in this broad context where signs of mercy are draining that Pope Francis announced the Great Jubilee Year of Mercy.

The Jubilee Year of Mercy

In St. Peter's Basilica, during a penitential service on March 13, 2015, Pope Francis announced the celebration of an "Extraordinary Holy Year, a Jubilee Year of Mercy." The pope formally announced the Jubilee Year with the Bull of Indiction *Misericordiae Vultus* on April 11 at the first Vespers of the Second Sunday of Easter in the Vatican Basilica. Holy Father exhorted, "The Church, in this time of great historical change, is called to offer more evident signs of God's presence and closeness. This is not the time to be distracted; on the contrary we need to be vigilant and to reawaken in ourselves the capacity to see what is essential."²

Pope Francis has made mercy a central theme of his papacy, speaking of it often in homilies and in his written texts.³ His apostolic exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium* (The Joy of the Gospel), uses the word 32 times. Cardinal Christoph Schönborn observes, "in a world full of violence and injustice mercy has been urged as the answer to its troubles."⁴ It is an invitation to turn to the God of compassion. The Jubilee Year would begin on this year's feast of Immaculate Conception and will close on November 20, 2016 on the feast day of Christ the King.⁵ The Holy Year of Mercy will have opportunity to encourage

² Pope Francis, "A time of reawakening", *L'Osservatore Romano*, Friday, 17th April 2015, 8. This is a homily delivered by the Pope in Italian consigning the Bull of Indiction *Misericordiae Vultus*, meaning the face of mercy.

³ Many journalists often observe this fact. Regarding the book *Mercy* written by Card. Walter Kasper, the Pope observes that it has done him much good.

⁴ Christoph Schönborn, "This is the time of mercy", *The Tablet*, 16 May 2015, 12.

⁵ Cf. http://en.radiovaticana.va/news/2015/03/13/about_the_jubilee_of_mercy/1129281: In St. Peter's Basilica, Pope Francis announced on, March 13, 2015, the celebration of an "extraordinary Holy Year". This "Jubilee of Mercy" will commence with the opening of the Holy Door in St. Peter's on the Solemnity

Christians to meet real needs of people with concrete assistance, to experience a "true pilgrimage on foot" and to send "missionaries of mercy" throughout the world to forgive even the most serious of sins.⁶

Mercy in *Misericordiae Vultus*

Mercy is the very foundation of Christian life. The Bull presents mercy in its Trinitarian and Christological dimension. Everything in God speaks of mercy. The compassionate ministry of Jesus is elaborately explained. Jesus responded to the deepest needs of the people. The Church has a duty to announce the mercy of God. To live and testify to mercy is absolutely necessary for the credibility of the message of the Church. The very language and gestures of the Church should communicate the Gospel message of mercy.

The Holy Father explains what is meant by mercy:

We need constantly to contemplate the mystery of mercy. It is a wellspring of joy, serenity, and peace. Our salvation depends on it. Mercy: the word reveals the very mystery of the Most Holy Trinity. Mercy: the ultimate and supreme act by which God comes to meet us. Mercy: the fundamental law that dwells in the heart of every person who looks sincerely into the eyes of his brothers and sisters on the path of life. Mercy: the bridge that connects God and man, opening our hearts to the hope of being loved forever despite our sinfulness.⁷

of the Immaculate Conception, 2015, and will conclude on November 20, 2016 with the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe. At the start of the New Year, the Holy Father had stated: "This is the time of mercy. It is important that the lay faithful live it and bring it into different social environments. Go forth!" Pope formally announced the jubilee year with The Bull of Indiction *Misericordia e Vultus* read during the vespers of Divine Mercy Saturday on April 11, 2015.

⁶Cf. Salvatore Fisichella, 'Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy Press Conference, May 5, 2015, Missionaries of mercy to be sent out across the world for Holy Year', *Catholic Herald* May 6, 2015, available from <http://www.catholicherald.co.uk/news/2015/05/06/missionaries-of-mercy-to-be-sent-out-across-the-world-for-holy-year/> accessed on 20.05.2015.

⁷ Pope Francis, *Misericordiae Vultus* 2.

Thus one can clearly perceive that mercy is not a cosmetic term. It is a term with a specific and direct relationship with the Gospel. The Pope presents mercy as the essence of the Gospel.

The motto of the Jubilee Year

“Merciful like the Father”(Lk 6:36) is the motto of this Jubilee Year. According to Archbishop Fisichella, this motto serves as an invitation to follow the merciful example of the *Father* who asks us not to judge or condemn but to forgive and to give love and forgiveness without measure. It builds on the central content of the Gospel message and intends to call the Church once again to its missionary priority: “to be a sign and witness (of mercy) in every aspect of its pastoral life.”⁸

Some Major Events in the Jubilee Year ⁹

This Jubilee year will be celebrated in Rome as well as in the local churches. The year long extraordinary jubilee also will include several individual jubilee days for various groups like workers, prisoners, youth, lay faithful working in sanctuaries, those in consecrated life, Roman curia, catechists, disabled persons, the faithful departed, etc. The goal of the Jubilee year is to bring to every person the Gospel of mercy. There will be significant efforts to enact the Pope’s vision to reach those who live on the existential peripheries, the poor, the marginalized, the suffering and all those who need tenderness.

These events invite all the faithful to think more deeply and responsibly about our mission in the contemporary world. There are different dimensions of the Jubilee Year as expressed in the *Bull of Indiction*: pilgrimage, spiritual and corporeal works of mercy, the sacrament of penance and indulgence.¹⁰ In this paper we are dealing mainly with the corporeal dimension of the Jubilee which emphasizes the need to meet needy people that will express mercy through tangible assistance.

⁸ Salvatore Fisichella, ‘Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy Press Conference’, available from <http://www.im.va/content/gdm/en/presentazione.html>, accessed on 22.05.2015.

⁹ Cf. <http://www.iubilaeummisericordiae.va/content/gdm/en/presentazione.html>, accessed on 23.05.2015.

¹⁰ Cf. “The Face of Mercy”, *L’Osservatore Romano*, Friday, 17th April 2015, 1.

Mercy as the Heart of the Gospel

Pope Francis is intent on reviving the Church; he is driven by the Gospel message. He envisions a Church proclaiming the Good News of the Gospel to the poor and the marginalized, who intervenes for the refugees and migrants, who speaks against the inequalities of wealth and distribution.¹¹ In the gloomy scenario of the contemporary world, the Pope continues to stress the experience of divine mercy, the healing touch of Christ, who in Mk 1, 40-45 speaks to a leper, touches him and thus encounters 'the other' in the leper. "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord', shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven" (Mt 7:21).

Mercy is not reductionism of the Gospel truth to social realities; it is the very heart of the Gospel.¹² "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed" (Lk 4:18). The persons who need such liberation are not abstract, nameless individuals but persons in the image of Christ. "Whatever you did for one of these least brothers or sisters of mine, you did for me" (Mt 25:40). Mercy provides an anthropology that is both transcendent and immanent. It provides a category to understand the world today, to offer biblical solutions to the challenges of the times.

Mercy is God's Love in Action

Divine mercy is the sign of God's love towards us. It is gratuitous. It transforms; it is experiential. Love of God is made manifest through merciful acts: these acts foster relationships, they do not differentiate people. Mercy summons persons together into the Church. Mercy is the point of departure, with its focus on the needy. This departure provides a new spiritual experience, new vigour for our faith. Mercy is

¹¹ Cf. Address of Pope Francis to the European Parliament, Strasbourg, November 25, 2014, available from <https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2014/november/documents/papa-francesco-20141125-strasburgo-parlamento-europeo.html>, accessed on 10. 10. 2015.

¹² Cf. Pope John Paul II, *Dives in Misericordia* 3.

the manner of living our faith and communicating that faith. Active love demands unending engagement and commitment to the whole of humankind. In *Brothers Karamazov* Dostoevsky insists that “we are all responsible for everyone else, but I am more responsible for all others.”¹³ Therefore the Pope exhorts priests: “The ministers of the Gospel must be people who can warm the hearts of the people...the people of God wants pastors, not clergy acting out as bureaucrats or government officials.”¹⁴

Being merciful is not a question of new forms of thinking or avantgarde theology or philosophy. It is a question of applying long held theological principles to the signs of the times. Cardinal Gerhard Mueller observes rightly that “Solidarity is more than sporadic acts of generosity. It is a mood of thought and action that begins with the community, giving priority to the life of all, as opposed to merely thinking in terms of the individual. It means fighting against the structural causes of poverty, inequality, the lack of work, the negation of rights.”¹⁵ *Justice in the World* teaches that we should make an examination of consciences of our life styles and it must be asked “whether our life style exemplifies that sparingness with regard to consumption which we preach to others as necessary in order that so many millions of hungry people throughout the world may be fed.”¹⁶

Encounter with the Suffering, Depersonalized Persons

It has already been mentioned that we live in an economic culture which puts money and profit above people. We are living in an era,

¹³ Dostoevsky's Alyosha Karamazov, as quoted in *Routledge History of Philosophy*, Vol. VIII, 136.

¹⁴ Pope Francis, Interview given to Fr. Antonio Spadaro, editor of *La Civiltà Cattolica*, available from https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2013/september/documents/papa-francesco_20130921_intervista-spadaro.html, accessed on 22.10.2015.

¹⁵ Gerhard Mueller, ‘Cardinal says Pope’s steady focus on poverty emphasizes body, soul’ available from <http://nronline.org/news/faith-parish/cardinal-says-popes-steady-focus-poverty-emphasizes-body-soul>, accessed on 21.10.15.

¹⁶ 1971 Synod of Bishops, *Justice in the World* 48.

either in the Church or in the society, in public life or in business, of the flight of virtue and its replacement by individualism. There is a growing tendency to depersonalize and dehumanize fellow human beings. Gustavo Gutierrez observes, "The majority of peoples today are still non-persons. They are not even considered as human persons."¹⁷ The people on the margins of the society are disregarded. According to FAO, 800 million people are suffering from chronic hunger, 2 billion are undernourished, 1.5 billion are overweight, 500 million are obese, and 1% of world's population owns more than half of the world's total wealth.

Being the protector of the poor, of the creation, of the dignity of the human person is a *sine qua non* of being Christian. The mission of Jesus revealed the mystery of divine compassion; his words, relationships, gestures, signs and works bear witness to this. He approached the sinners, the suffering, the marginalized, the poor, with the face and hands of mercy. With a merciful look he could read the hearts of the people (Mt 14:14; Mt 15:37; Lk 7:15). There needs to be a shift of focus from the centre to the peripheries, giving tangible assistance to those who are on the fringes of society.

According to the Jewish philosopher and Talmudic commentator, Emmanuel Levinas, life is vocational. "Life addresses me, calls out to me, asks after me. Life asks me to respond, to answer, to say: here I am for you...in the name of God."¹⁸ The personal God is not approached outside of all human presence. Going towards God is meaningless unless seen in terms of my primary going towards the other person. A theological philosophical search which cannot accommodate humanity, which does not make us better human beings in relation to God and our neighbours, does not deserve the effort. "I consider the human person", Martin Buber says, "to be the irremovable central place of the struggle between the world's movement away from God and its movement towards God."¹⁹

¹⁷ Gustavo Gutierrez, "Bartolome de las Casas, Defender of the Indians", *Pacifica* 5, 1992, 272, quoted in Terry Veling, "The Personal and Spiritual Life", *The Way* 52/1, January 2013.

¹⁸ Emmanuel Levinas, *Of God Who Comes to Mind*, Stanford 1998, 75.

¹⁹ Martin Buber, *Between Man and Man*, New York, Collier 1965, 70

The Expression of Mercy in Charity

No matter what their economic status is, people have inherent dignity. They are created in the image and likeness of God. They have the right to live a dignified life. Each and every person has value, worth of great respect, and must be free from manipulation, slavery, and exploitation. When one fails to bring bread to one's table it is a question of dignity. When it is due to false economic systems and deprived opportunities, all are responsible. To provide for the family is not merely a question of poverty but a question of basic dignity and fundamental human right.

Any society can be tested moral or pious on the grounds of how it treats its most vulnerable members including the poor.²⁰ Everyday we encounter concrete situations which demand more than justice. They demand our constant and concentrated concern. They are situations which do not directly oblige us legally, but bind us morally. Preferential option for the poor has to be expressed in worldwide dimensions.²¹ A genuine encounter with the world open our eyes to the adversities of others: poverty, malnutrition, sickness, homelessness, unemployment, lack of proper education, racism, sexism, domestic violence, abandonment, loneliness, etc.

Cardinal Walter Kasper lists four kinds of poverty: physical or economic poverty where homelessness, lack of food, shelter, serious illness, etc., prevail; cultural poverty which includes illiteracy, lack of chances for education, exclusion from social and cultural life, etc. The third form of poverty is the lack of relationships which may include loneliness, isolation, the loss of a partner, family members marginalization, imprisonment, etc. The final form of poverty is spiritual poverty which shows inner emptiness, hopelessness and desolation.

²⁰ *Gaudium et Spes* 29.

²¹ Cf. Pope John Paul II, *Sollicitudo rei Socialis* 42.

²² Cf. Walter Kasper, *Mercy: The Essence of the Gospel and the key to Christian life*, New York, Paulist Press 2013, 143-144. The treatment of mercy in Walter Kasper's book was criticized by the American conservative Catholic magazine *First Things*. The author Daniel P Moloney contests Kasper's idea of mercy

Kasper mentions the prayer of St. Faustyna Kowalska to explain what is meant by mercy. Faustyna expresses in this prayer the depth and delicacy of mercy and its meaning for a Christian. Merciful means being transformed into Jesus.²³

Mercy is love which becomes concrete in deeds where mere law is not sufficient. Kasper explains that personal connectedness with Jesus Christ means participation in his pro-existence. Consequently we can conclude that Christian form of mercy is an existence for others.²⁴ One has to share the life and mission of the master. That means s/he has to carry the cross of the master. In Mk 8:34 Jesus says, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me."

This is a call to be responded through one's entire existence. Like a grain of wheat that falls into the ground and dies every Christian has to wear themselves out in their words, deeds, and through their entire existence. Kasper says that representative atonement is a key concept of Christian existence.²⁵ The Second Vatican Council teaches that the Church encompasses with love all who are afflicted with human suffering, and in the poor and afflicted sees the image of its poor and suffering Founder. The church does all it can to relieve their need and in them it strives to serve Christ.²⁶ The mission of the Church is defined by how she is touched and shaped by the joys and sorrows of the people of God. *Gaudium et Spes* focused its attention on the world of men and women, with the sum of those realities in the midst of which human beings live; that world which is the theatre of their history, and the heir of their energies, their tragedies and triumphs.²⁷ Therefore,

related to forgiveness in matters of serious sins. He does not agree with the idea that mercy in this sense is the essential message of the Gospel. Cf. Daniel P. Moloney, *First Things*, March 2015, available from <http://www.firstthings.com/article/2015/03/what-mercy-is>, accessed on 22.10.2015. There was response and counter response between these two authors.

²³ *Tagebuch der Maria Faustyna Kowalska*, Hauteville, Parvis verlag 1990, 80f quoted in Kasper, *Mercy*, 144.

²⁴ Kasper, *Mercy*, 150.

²⁵ Cf. Kasper, 152

²⁶ Cf. *Lumen Gentium* 8.

²⁷ Cf. *Gaudium et Spes* 2.

“The Church cannot neglect the service of charity any more than she can neglect the sacraments and the word.”²⁸

Becoming the Keepers of Others

“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy” (Mt 5:7). God’s vision for humanity is embodied in the ministry of Jesus who asks each person to become the keepers of others, to serve the least among us. But the fact is that we fall short of God’s vision. There is a disconnection between the vision God has for humanity and the way in fact things are playing out in history.

Christian faithful have to embrace and express a prophetic voice. Talk of being prophets in the world is common place among religious especially in this Year of Consecrated Life. Being prophets is a risky business. It means preferring the truth to power which is bound to upset those in control. Seeking and speaking the truth is a command from God. Prophetic voice is the proclamation of the Gospel in words and actions and calling people of faith and others of good will to return to God and live in a new way.

Prophetic life is a witness to the world that living Gospel is possible. Hearing the cry of the poor and doing something in concrete response is challenging, needed and demanded from the faithful. “We must not seek the child Jesus in the pretty figures of our Christmas cribs. We must seek him among the undernourished children who have gone to bed at night with nothing to eat, among the poor newsboys who will sleep covered with newspapers in doorways”,²⁹ says Blessed Oscar Romero. A Christian who wants to be called by that name should be a visible sign of the mercy of Jesus Christ. Through his engagements he has to bear witness to the passion, death and resurrection of Christ. Crisis situations arise unexpectedly. Many often live their individualistic lives without any awareness of such tragic crisis situations.

²⁸ Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate* 22.

²⁹ Oscar Romero, ‘Sermon’, December 24, 1979, quoted in http://community.beliefnet.com/beliefnet/blog/2009/12/25/the_child_jesus_!, accessed on 21.05.2015.

Only people with the merciful heart of Christ can recognize such crisis and rise up to the occasion. It seems that such generous people are being evangelized by these tragic events and the people concerned. They acquire extraordinary courage and conviction to ensure a remedial action in that crisis. When they are filled with mercy they become innovators and motivate others to take action, to come out of their comfort zones, to reach to the people on the fringes. Oscar Romero, Fr. Damien, Mother Teresa of Calcutta, and others are striking witnesses of mercy personified. It is worthy to remember the words of Cardinal Fernando Filoni on Mother Teresa, "Mother Teresa was a great evangelizer, but she was first evangelized by the poor."³⁰

A Vision of Mercy in Theology and Philosophy

The situations demand robust, energetic, and determined leadership from all to be the living witnesses of Incarnate Mercy. An energetic mission of the Church is needed. A lukewarm response or a mere theological or philosophical analysis or dogmatic pronouncement is not sufficient. A pastoral approach is needed.

Very often we take a damagingly cerebral view of the world. But we gain understanding of the world not by merely speculating but especially by acting with other creatures and by doing things. We are not mere creatures operating inside ourselves. We become good by doing good, not by thinking about goodness or writing about goodness. We change ourselves not by merely thinking differently, but especially by acting differently.

Maturity of approach takes into account the social milieu in which the Word unfolds; the real world and its concrete problems. In the real world there are people who suffer, who commit sins, who are exploited, and marginalized. Our studies need breadth and depth to be relevant in the postmodern world. This world provides all sorts of superficialities and is content with the nausea created by flamboyant peripheral events. It is true and important that we should not be limited

³⁰ Fernando Filoni, 'The poor evangelized Mother Theresa first'. *UCAnews*, available from <http://www.ucanews.com/news/the-poor-evangelized-mother-teresa-first-vatican-envoy-says/74265>, accessed on 23.10.2015.

to earthly and temporal theology. However, earthly and temporal affairs should be related to the proclamation of the Kingdom of God.

Anyone who pursues theology seriously should reflect on the problems of the society, of fear, hunger, insult, dehumanization, pride and oppression. Learning should foster commitments. Only if we are planted solidly on the earth, all our classroom academic disciplines and exercises will develop perspectives related to the lives of the people. We have to reexamine the purpose, performance, and impact of our intellectual development. Speculation should be focused on evangelization. The Church needs committed men and women who can reach to the peripheries, to the needy and to the lost. We are called to be missionaries of mercy and charity. Our narrow and often predetermined lenses create much fog. Only by openness to the Holy Spirit and openness to the realities of suffering this fog is removed.

The problem is not about knowledge or learning but living in the established social systems unthinkingly. One has to be convinced that before all the rational thoughts, analysis, judgments, comparison, determination there is the other, the person. Study achieves meaning when we learn to appreciate the splendour and wonder of God's creation, of each and every existence, and be merciful to the whole of creation.

There is a grave danger of intellectual narcissism and elitism becoming part of academic studies. If it is real thirst for knowledge, it is necessary to appreciate and admire that we are privileged to be merciful as we delve deep in sacred sciences. But one who is engaged in abstract conceptual theories only becomes pretentious and narcissistic. If we do not experience communion or do not foster communion how can we teach or understand Trinitarian communion? If we do not see the face of the other in our daily life, if the other does not see the divine face of mercy in our corporeal and spiritual undertakings, how can we teach others true ethics or Christian morality? Theory is nothing more than narcissistic idle-talk until it is experienced or applied. Leave alone whatever we learn or do: philosophy, bible, or liturgy; what matters, is the effects rooted in our religious attitudes and the way of proceeding.

Gaudium et Spes yearned to spread everywhere a transforming experience and love of Jesus Christ. Without this, our attempts to study theology or philosophy remain a cosmetic affair as G. O Collins points out.³¹ Theology can serve to strengthen the faith of the believers and to make Christianity intellectually convincing to non-believers and at the same time it can bring the student to a close relationship with Christ. But it should not be limited to these two dimensions. It has to transcend these dimensions and incorporate everyday lives of the people with the challenges and tribulations and despair they face. Our studies should enable us to respond to the situations in which people live.³²

Mercy and the Moral Revival of Our Civilization

In a world of uncertain and painful events, in order to rediscover the merciful face of the Father, we have to perform corporeal and spiritual works of mercy. The Pope says in *Evangelii Gaudium*:

Jesus, the evangelizer par excellence and the Gospel in person, identifies especially with the little ones (cf. *Mt* 25:40). This reminds us Christians that we are called to care for the vulnerable of the earth. But the current model, with its emphasis on success and self-reliance, does not appear to favour an investment in efforts to help the slow, the weak or the less talented to find opportunities in life.³³

Our civilization urgently requires a moral revival. We should learn with Aristotle or Thomas Aquinas that our lives have a purpose, a *telos*. That means there is a purpose of becoming better, becoming what we are meant to be. Aristotle is of the opinion that virtues can be learned.

Catholic faith, centred on Jesus Christ, on "the face of Mercy", is essential to the growth and development of the human race. A civilization without proper faith is doomed to fail. Pope Benedict XVI

³¹ Gerald O' Collins, "Still far to go", *The Tablet*, 9 February 2013, 11.

³² Deane William Fenn, *Third World liberation Theologies*. Maryknoll. Orbis Books 1986, 17.

³³ Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* 209.

observes that faith and reason need each other as mutual interrogators. "Without the light of Christ the light of reason is not sufficient to enlighten humanity and the world."³⁴ The question arises. Can we offer leadership and direction? We should not be too sociological, too political, too celebrational, too self-sufficient or too accommodating, above all too cerebral. All these show a consistent lack of spiritual depth.

Let us not fall into humiliating indifference or a monotonous routine that prevents us from discovering what is new! Let us ward off destructive cynicism! Let us open our eyes and see the misery of the world, the wounds of our brothers and sisters who are denied their dignity, and let us recognize that we are compelled to heed their cry for help! May we reach out to them and support them so that they can feel the warmth of our presence, our friendship, and our fraternity! May their cry become our own, and together may we break down the barriers of indifference that too often reign supreme and mask our hypocrisy and egoism!³⁵

Conclusion

Mercy demands contextual mediations with powerful witness. It demands a critical examination of the Gospel message and existential realities. Mercy is not something abstract; it is not a rhetorical device but something tangible. What is needed is a critical reflection of the challenges and situations. If we do this, one will understand that there is the scope of intense examination of conscience and improvement in the Church. This reflection is not complete in itself. It should be translated into concrete witness.

The mercy of God is to be extended beyond the frontiers of Christian society, to all in need. Through the merciful acts, they have to encounter Jesus, the incarnate son of God: the love of the Father.

³⁴ Pope Benedict XVI, 'Christmas address 2005', available from http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/messages/urbi/documents/hf_ben-xvi_mes_20051225_urbi.html, accessed on 18.05.2015.

³⁵ *Misericordiae Vultus* 15.

One cannot live Christianity in purely religious and aesthetic terms. They have to reexamine and change their whole attitude towards God, religion and social commitment. Speaking and singing of a merciful God on Sundays or in retreat houses and returning to one's work places or areas of social engagements with an exploitative, egoistic, consumerist, unrepentant spirituality is a contradiction. Their double standards lead to poverty, destruction of human dignity, and tarnish the face of God.

Cardinal Gerhard Mueller, on the presentation of his book, *Poor for Poor: The Mission of the Church*, a collection of his writings on Liberation Theology, recounted how Gustavo Gutierrez brought him to visit the slums in Lima, where he could experience the poverty and the joy of the poor, and could learn that "being poor in spirit means to be true disciples of Jesus Christ."³⁶ Mercy is to be embodied in words, gestures, and concrete service to the poorest of the poor, to the unwanted in the world. The Year of Mercy is an occasion for the faithful to come closer to God, seek forgiveness and be reconciled through confession; together with that it demands us to take mercy at its face value, with courage and fidelity, with a genuine concern for the poor and the needy.

St. Joseph Pontifical Seminary
Mangalapuzha
Aluva, Kerala 683102
e-mail: johnnellikunnel@yahoo.com

³⁶ Gerhard Mueller, 'Cardinal: Liberation Theology needed separation from Marxism', available from <http://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/cardinal-liberation-theology-needed-separation-from-marxism/> accessed on 23.10.2015.

Scripture, Virtue, Ethics, and Public Life Justice and Mercy in Isaiah 42/Matthew 12

Robert Gascoigne

Mercy cannot be talked about without reference to justice. So in theological discussions on justice we very soon land into areas of virtues. In discussions on the virtues of mercy and justice, we cannot avoid certain paradigmatic scriptural passages. In this article, Professor Robert Gascoigne, from Australian Catholic University, explores the continuing power and resonance of Isaiah's image of the servant of the Lord, taken up by the writer of Matthew's Gospel as the programme of Jesus of Nazareth. He comes to conclude that through analogical imagination this image of Jesus can inspire a pattern of virtue in our own very different world. In both Church and society, we are challenged by these Scriptural texts to imagine and live out forms of mercy and compassion that both safeguard and exceed justice.

The 'Servant of the Lord' in Isaiah 42 and Matthew 12

Here is my servant, whom I uphold,
my chosen, in whom my soul delights;
I have put my spirit upon him;
he will bring forth justice to the nations.

He will not cry or lift up his voice,
or make it heard in the street;
a bruised reed he will not break,
and a dimly burning wick he will not quench;
he will faithfully bring forth justice.

He will not grow faint or be crushed
until he has established justice in the earth;
and the coastlands wait for his teaching.

This passage of the book of Isaiah, Chapter 42, 1-4,¹ is often referred to as the first 'Song of the Servant of the Lord', following Bernard Duhm's hypothesis that the four servant songs are a distinct body of material stemming from an author distinct from Second Isaiah.² More recent scholarship is critical of this hypothesis, favouring a continuity of authorship between these four passages and the texts that precede and follow them.³ This first proclamation of the servant and his role has the form of an oracle of designation of a prophet. The identity of the servant, in this original Isaianic context, has of course long been the subject of intensive scholarly debate, but cannot concern us here. Yet, as John Goldingay argues, the very anonymity of the servant draws the passage's hearers into interpretation: 'The picture of the servant is on the way to becoming a role seeking someone to fulfill it.'⁴ The servant is one with God's spirit who can bring forth justice in a way that is gentle and merciful beyond measure, as the images of the 'bruised reed' and 'dimly burning wick' so memorably and powerfully convey.

This passage from the book of Isaiah became a key part of Matthew's Gospel, quoted, with some minor amendments, in Matthew 12:15-21. It is the longest Old Testament quotation in the Gospels.⁵ Matthew introduces it in the context of the Marcan Messianic secret,

¹ Here given in the NRSV translation.

² Duhm's analysis was presented in his *Das Buch Jesaia übersetzt und erklärt*, 1892. Herbert Haag's *Der Gottesknecht bei Deuterojesaja* (*Erträge der Forschung*, Bd. 233, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft: Darmstadt 1985) gives a detailed history of the scholarship on the servant songs, and Duhm's thesis in particular.

³ See, for example, Brevard S. Childs, *Isaiah* (Old Testament Library, Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 2001), who argues that the four 'songs' should be interpreted 'within their present literary context of chapters 40-55' and that there is substantial continuity between the 'song' of ch. 42 and the previous chapter of the book of Isaiah (323).

⁴ John Goldingay, *The Message of Isaiah 40-55. A Literary-Theological Commentary* (London: T. and T. Clark, 2005), 154.

⁵ Craig A. Evans, *Matthew. New Cambridge Bible Commentary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 253.

but the significance of the Isaianic text goes beyond this, and in fact emphasizes the servant's own silence rather than the silence of others.⁶ This depiction of Jesus as the servant plays a programmatic role in Matthew's Gospel. Immediately before it Jesus has been confronted by his opponents, who accuse him of desecrating the Sabbath and resolve to destroy him. Jesus avoids confrontation, even when threatened by his opponents, and will be a Messiah who brings justice with mercy. Ulrich Luz argues that

the text gives the readers the freedom to apply to themselves the images of the reed and the wick in light of Matthew's story of Jesus. Important for him is the basic *christological* direction that he gives with the help of these images. They show Christ's...patience, nonviolence, peacefulness, kindness and love.⁷

Structure of this Essay

The purpose of this essay is to offer some brief reflections on the way in which this portrayal of the servant as one who can bring about God's justice with such gentleness and mercy can be a source of ethical inspiration and guidance in both ecclesial and public political life. To do this, I will first consider some of the key conclusions of recent studies in the relationship between Scripture and virtue ethics, specifically the work of William Spohn and Lucas Chan. I will then present some theological and philosophical reflections on the meaning of mercy in contemporary ecclesial and public life: firstly, some aspects of Cardinal Walter Kasper's and Pope Francis' recent reflections on the meaning of mercy; secondly, a consideration of Martha Nussbaum's recent work on the role of compassion as a political emotion in the public life of liberal societies, and some of the criticisms that have been made of humanitarian compassion in recent literature, discussing

⁶ As Ulrich Luz notes, in *Matthew 8-20* (Hermeneia. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2001), 191, the Marcan Messianic secret motif provides a small bridge from vs. 16 to the Isaianic quotation, but the entire weight is on the quotation itself, and vs. 19 is about the servant's own silence rather than the silence of others.

⁷ Luz, *Matthew 8-20*, 195.

in particular Bruce Ward's *Redeeming the Enlightenment: Christianity and the Liberal Virtues*, and Michael Banner's *The Ethics of Everyday Life: Moral Theology, Social Anthropology and the Imagination of the Human*.

Scripture and Virtue Ethics: William Spohn and Lucas Chan

In his *Go and Do Likewise: Jesus and Ethics*, William Spohn argues that virtue ethics is the best ethical approach to the Scriptures since 'it fits the narrative form of the New Testament and can explain how the particular story of Jesus shapes the moral character of individuals and communities'.⁸ Spohn argues that the analogical imagination – a term well-known from David Tracy's major work of that name⁹ – bridges the moral reflection of contemporary Christians and the words and deeds of Jesus.¹⁰ Through analogy, the virtues displayed by Jesus can become an inspiration for a way of living in our own very different world. In Part 2 of his book, Spohn argues that Christian transformation through Scripture can be understood in terms of its influence on three aspects of our existence: our moral perceptions, our dispositions and our identity. A key question he asks is: 'How do the paradigms, the normative patterns, of the life of Jesus empower the moral life?'¹¹

In his *Biblical Ethics in the Twenty-First Century*, Lucas Chan nominates four dimensions of virtue ethics as effective 'hinges and reference points' for relating Scripture and virtue theory'.¹² These four dimensions are: dispositions and character formation; practices and habits; exemplar; community and communal identity. Chan argues that the Bible 'is more important in forming character than in offering explicit ethical discourse' and that 'Scripture is a rich source for providing exemplary

⁸ William Spohn, *Go and Do Likewise: Jesus and Ethics*. (New York: Continuum, 1999), 28.

⁹ David Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism*. (New York: Crossroad, 1981).

¹⁰ *Go and Do Likewise*, 50.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 120

¹² Lucas Chan, *Biblical Ethics in the 21st Century: Developments, Emerging Consensus and Future Directions*. (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 2013), 112.

models – either explicitly or implicitly – for the cultivation of virtues and our moral formation as individuals and as a faith community'.¹³

The work of Spohn and Chan makes a very persuasive case that virtue ethics is the best means of linking Scripture with contemporary ethical life. I would argue that virtue ethics does need to be supplemented by a theory of the objective good, specifically an ethic of human dignity and the goodness of creation in the light of Christian faith, and by normative ethics based on stringent moral reasoning. Having noted this, I think that virtue ethics does have the hermeneutical strengths that Spohn and Chan have identified. As they argue, the relation of Scripture to living the Christian life today is most of all through the ways in which it can form and transform us, and inspire us through exemplary models, most of all through Jesus himself, whom Matthew portrays through the Isaianic image of the servant of the Lord. How then can this image inspire the practice of justice with mercy today in the public domain?

Mercy in Ecclesial Life:

Cardinal Walter Kasper and Pope Francis

Cardinal Walter Kasper's book *Mercy: The Essence of the Gospel and the Key to Christian Life*, published in German in 2012 and in English translation in 2013,¹⁴ is an extended reflection on the meaning of mercy in its Scriptural and theological foundations and in ecclesial and socio-political life. In terms of ecclesial life, in this book and in other writings he has developed this theme in relation to marriage and family life, in particular the question of the admission to the eucharist of divorced and civilly remarried Catholics, which was considered at the Assemblies of the Synod of Bishops on the family, in October 2014 and October 2015. Kasper acknowledges that the greatest criticism of the church is that her deeds do not match her words; that she is in fact

¹³ *Biblical Ethics in the 21st Century*, 111.

¹⁴ German original: *Barmherzigkeit: Grundbegriff des Evangeliums – Schlüsselchristlichen Lebens* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2012); ET: *Mercy: The Essence of the Gospel and the Key to Christian Life*, trans. W. Madges. (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 2013).

hard and unmerciful to many. In its proclamation, the Church must ensure that the proclamation of God's mercy becomes real for us today, citing Hebrews 3:7, 'If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts'.

¹⁵ Kasper's emphasis is that mercy does not abolish justice, but rather fulfills it. Here he invokes the concept of *epikeia* as a higher justice, a justice informed by mercy which seeks the true meaning of justice in concrete situations, not as arbitrariness nor as situation ethics, but rather to bring the intention of the law to realization in ways that do justice to specific situations.¹⁶ He expressed this general concern in a very specific way in his February 2014 speech to the Extraordinary Consistory on the Family, on the subject of *Das Evangelium von der Familie* (*The Gospel of the Family*).¹⁷ The title of his speech is significant – the Gospel of the family 'is not a code of law. It is the light and the power of life, which is Jesus Christ; it bestows what it requires.'¹⁸ *The Gospel of the Family* concludes with a focus on the pastoral care of the divorced and civilly re-married, including some specific recommendations for a revision of pastoral practice. Kasper's attempt to interpret justice through the lens of mercy is particularly evident in his response to those who argue that Catholics in this situation can receive spiritual communion, although not sacramental communion:

If we exclude divorced and remarried Christians, who are properly disposed, from the sacraments and refer them to the extrasacramental way of salvation, do we not then place the fundamental sacramental structure of the Church in question? Wherefore then the Church? Do we not then pay too high a price? Some argue that it is precisely non-participation in communion that demonstrates the sanctity of the sacrament. The counter question is: Does that not exploit a human being, if we make him or her into a sign for others, when he or she cries for help? Are we going to let him or her starve sacramentally so that others may live?¹⁹

¹⁵ *Barmherzigkeit*, 158:

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 176.

¹⁷ *Das Evangelium von der Familie. Die Rede vor dem Konsistorium*. (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2014); ET: *The Gospel of the Family*. (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 2014).

¹⁸ *The Gospel of the Family*, 3-4. (Cited from ET.)a

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 30.

Pope Francis has also made the theme of mercy central to his pontificate.

During the conclave that resulted in his election, while still Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio, he received a copy of Kasper's book and remarked, "Ah mercy! This is the name of our God." At his first Angelus, Pope Francis announced, "This book has done me so much good." Mercy, Francis said, "changes the world... makes the world less cold and more just. We need to understand properly this mercy of God."²⁰

In April 2015, he promulgated the document *Misericordiae Vultus* 'The Face of Mercy', which proclaims a Holy Year of Mercy, beginning on 8th December. In this document he speaks of the meaning of God's mercy in his own life:

The calling of Matthew is also presented within the context of mercy. Passing by the tax collector's booth, Jesus looked intently at Matthew. It was a look full of mercy that forgave the sins of that man, a sinner and a tax collector, whom Jesus chose against the hesitation of the disciples – to become one of the Twelve. Saint Bede the Venerable, commenting on this Gospel passage, wrote that Jesus looked upon Matthew with merciful love and chose him: *miserando atque eligendo*. This expression impressed me so much that I chose it for my episcopal motto.²¹

Compassion in the Public Life of Liberal Societies: Martha Nussbaum

In her book *Political Emotions: Why Love Matters for Justice* published in 2013, Martha Nussbaum, writing as a political liberal, seeks to address a significant lacuna in the liberal tradition, namely, the lack of a theory of constructive political emotion. For Nussbaum

²⁰ Kasper's book: Mercy has been "criminally neglected," which is "catastrophic", Thomas Ryan, *National Catholic Reporter*, October 8, 2014 <http://ncronline.org/books/2014/10/kaspers-book-mercy-has-been-criminally-neglected-which-catastrophic-situation>.

²¹ *Misericordiae Vultus*, 8. https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_letters/documents/papa-francesco_bolla_20150411_misericordiae_vultus.html. The calling of Matthew is depicted with characteristically dramatic genius by Caravaggio in the Church of St Louis of the French in Rome.

All societies need to think about compassion for loss, anger at injustice, the limiting of envy and disgust in favour of inclusive sympathy. Ceding the terrain of emotion-shaping to antiliberal forces gives them a huge advantage in the people's hearts and risks making people think of liberal values as tepid and boring.²²

In harmony with John Rawls' theory concerning the respective roles of comprehensive doctrines and the overlapping consensus in a liberal society,²³ Nussbaum argues that

public emotions ought to be both narrow and shallow, compared to the comprehensive doctrines that citizens hold. Occasionally, for urgent purposes, they may use the depth and resonance of one of those doctrines, but they had better counterbalance this gesture immediately by a commitment to pluralism and equal respect.²⁴

In her view, the lives and public presence of Martin Luther King Jr and Mahatma Gandhi demonstrated a respect for these principles, insofar as they were both deeply religious figures who also showed great respect for social pluralism and the need to foster social cohesion around democratic principles. Following her general perspective, the 'shallowness' of the political culture of emotion means that it 'should not support itself by drawing on theological or metaphysical traditions'.²⁵ It should rather draw on the social sciences, including psychology, and imaginative literature, with necessary critical alertness, since works of literature can themselves often be sectarian or partisan.

Before tracing the argument of *Political Emotions* a little further, some key points of Nussbaum's analysis of compassion from her earlier

²² Martha C. Nussbaum, *Political Emotions: Why Love Matters for Justice*. (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2013), 2.

²³ Rawls develops this theory in particular in his *Political Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993) and in "The Idea of Public Reason Revisited", in *The Law of Peoples with "The Idea of Public Reason Revisited"* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001).

²⁴ *Political Emotions*, 133.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 134.

work, *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions*, will give helpful background.²⁶ Here Nussbaum writes that some emotions 'expand the boundaries of the self, picturing the self as constituted in part by strong attachments to independent things and persons. Love and grief are paradigmatic of such emotions; and ... compassion pushes the boundaries of the self further outward than many types of love.'²⁷ A key part of her reflection on compassion is her critique of Aristotle's analysis of this emotion. In Nussbaum's account, Aristotle argued that 'the first cognitive requirement of compassion is a belief or appraisal that the suffering is serious rather than trivial. The second is the belief that the person does not deserve the suffering. The third is the belief that the possibilities of the person who experiences the emotions are similar to those of the sufferer.'²⁸ To this extent, compassion is linked to fear, since it is partly aroused by the sense that one may possibly suffer the same things. Yet, as Nussbaum convincingly argues, the Aristotelian account in fact limits the scope of compassion, since it excludes those with whom we cannot identify, whose condition in life seems so different to our own: 'All kinds of social barriers – of class, religion, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation – prove recalcitrant to the imagination, and this recalcitrance impedes emotion.'²⁹ Nussbaum overcomes this limitation in the Aristotelian account by affirming that

in order for compassion to be present, the person must consider the suffering of another as a significant part of his or her own scheme of goals and ends. She must take that person's ill as affecting her own flourishing. In effect, she must make herself vulnerable in the person of another. It is that *eudaimonistic judgement*, not the judgement of similar possibilities, that seems to be a necessary constituent of compassion.³⁰

²⁶ Martha Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

²⁷ *Upheavals of Thought*, 300.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 306.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 317.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 319.

For Nussbaum (in contrast to Aristotle) it is crucial that compassion sees the other's good as important to one's own. In this way, compassion is not restricted to those who are like ourselves – and whose suffering we can conceive of (and fear) as something that could befall us. It is rather an emotion that, through the power of the imagination, can be extended to our fellow human beings in any and all social and human contexts.

It is this theory of compassion that informs her more recent book, *Political Emotions*, which devotes particular attention and concern to the ways in which selective stigma and disgust can destroy social respect, e.g. in relation to African-Americans in the United States or outcastes in India. To counteract this, liberal societies need forms of art and festival that shape compassion and transcend disgust, 'through political rhetoric, publicly sponsored visual art, the design of public parks and monuments, public book discussions and the choice and content of public holidays and celebrations'.³¹ In particular, she argues, 'tragic spectatorship, emphasizing common human vulnerabilities, undoes the lies involved in the segmentations produced by disgust...making it possible to extend concern beyond the dominant group.'³²

In the context of her commitment to the Rawlsian idea of the overlapping consensus, together with her conviction that liberal ideals need emotional sources and sustenance, a fundamental question of her book is: 'How can the public culture of a nation that repudiates all religious and ideological establishments have enough substance and texture to be capable of the type of poetry, oratory and art that moves real people?'³³ Here she acknowledges the role that classic texts – such as Isaiah 42/Matthew 12 – can play, with some important qualifications. Some resonant symbols may come from a religious tradition, some (such as the Washington Vietnam Veterans Memorial, which she discusses in some detail) may not – but these different symbols can 'be appropriated into the general language of a society without being exclusionary, if they are advanced in connection with a robust pluralism'.³⁴ 'So political liberalism reminds us to remain vigilant

³¹*Political Emotions*, 261.

³²*Ibid.*, 262.

³³*Ibid.*, 387.

³⁴*Ibid.*, 387.

about the problem of pluralism and the dangers of hierarchy and establishment, but it does not doom the public culture to banality or silence.³⁵

Critique of Nussbaum's Conception of Compassion: Bruce Ward

Political Emotions is a major contribution to reflection on the role of compassion in public life in liberal societies, both in terms of its sources and motivations and in its capacity to overcome social antipathies. However, Nussbaum's work, and the meaning of humanitarian compassion in general terms, have also been subjected to criticism. Bruce Ward's *Redeeming the Enlightenment: Christianity and the Liberal Virtues*, devotes critical attention to Nussbaum's conception of compassion, which he sees as exemplary of the best contemporary liberal thought. He notes that in liberal democracies 'there is at least one moral absolute that is publicly acknowledged, namely, that of compassion for the suffering of victims'.³⁶ For Ward,

Nussbaum's more positive argument for compassion is based on the acceptance, and indeed affirmation, of human vulnerability before the vicissitudes of life because of our embodied existence-in-relation-with-others. The very conditions of our existence mean that we ourselves and others are indeed exposed to being seriously damaged in our flourishing by suffering losses of various kinds that are not the result of our own choices. Compassion is not only morally justified as a human response, but also, in her argument positively beneficial in its effects in the world, primarily in two ways: as the basic social emotion that helps to cement people together in societies; and as an agent for the reduction of human suffering through its role in motivating people to "raise society's floor" by making the external goods of food, shelter, health care, and so on available to its most vulnerable members.³⁷

³⁵ Ibid., 388.

³⁶ Bruce Ward, *Redeeming the Enlightenment: Christianity and the Liberal Virtues*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 155.

³⁷ *Redeeming the Enlightenment*, 158.

Although he recognizes that Nussbaum makes a powerful defence of compassion in response to its Stoic critics, such as Seneca and Kant, Ward is generally critical of the implications of her conception of compassion. In his view, Nussbaum sees compassion as a means to other goods, especially social solidarity and 'raising society's floor', and it is not clear how her emphasis on the role of compassion is superior to Rawls' idea of rational self-interest. For Ward, Nussbaum's conception of compassion does not respond convincingly to Nietzsche's criticism that compassion is a disguised egoism shaped by resentment. Further, her recommendations of a public encouragement of compassion – for example, through forms of art and festival that shape compassion and transcend disgust – show little cognizance of the dangers of the abuse of power in seeking to enact good purposes dramatized in the 'Grand Inquisitor' motif in Dostoyevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*.³⁸

In my view, Ward's criticism does not do justice to Nussbaum's conception of compassion, which emphasizes that we must take another person's ill as affecting our own flourishing and, in effect, make ourselves vulnerable in the person of another. In this way, it is in accord with the Biblical tradition, although not seeking Biblical grounding or justification. Further, liberal societies can engage in projects of public ethical enlightenment, including the evocation of compassion through public projects and works of art, without succumbing to the dangers of totalitarianism. A comparison of the Washington Vietnam Veterans' Memorial, or of the Berlin memorial to the Holocaust, with the images of totalitarian art that survive from Nazism and Stalinism can illustrate this point.

³⁸ Ward's critique of Nussbaum's conception of compassion is presented in Ch. 4 of *Redeeming the Enlightenment*. 'Compassion, "The Science of Active Love"', which includes a discussion of Rousseau's and Nietzsche's analyses of compassion, and of Dostoyevsky's 'Redemption of Rousseauian Compassion.'

Humanitarian Compassion and Christian Practices: Michael Banner

Chapter Four of Michael Banner's recent *The Ethics of Everyday Life*,³⁹ entitled 'Regarding Suffering: On the Discovery of the Pain of Christ, the Politics of Suffering and the Contemporary Mediation of the Woes of the World', considers a number of critiques of compassion in a liberal context. Banner emphasizes the key role of Christian practices of engagement and attention in relation to the suffering of Christ, such as Lenten scripture readings and the stations of the Cross, which can help contemporary human beings come to terms with the flood of distressing images of human suffering that modern media make possible, and alleviate a sense of mere spectatorship.

In the first section of this chapter Banner notes that the Christian conception of the suffering of Christ changed radically from the time of Augustine to the high Middle Ages. Augustine interpreted Christ's cry on the cross from Psalm 22 as 'about me' rather than about Christ, since Christ was divine, 'God had not abandoned him, since he himself was God'.⁴⁰ In Augustine's writings, notes Banner, 'the passion of Christ...is first of all a display of power, and only rather incidentally it can seem one of suffering.'⁴¹ There is an extraordinary shift from this perspective to the portrayal of Christ's suffering in, for example, Matthias Grünewald's sixteenth-century Isenheim Altarpiece, with its heart-rending depiction of Christ's wounds and of physical symptoms similar to those caused by plague and ergotism, which afflicted those cared for in the Monastery of St Antony for which it was originally painted. Banner argues that St Anselm's theology of the atonement played a key role in this shift, since this theology saw Christ's suffering as paying the debt, in contrast to earlier theologies which saw the union of humanity and divinity in Christ as in itself effective of

³⁹ Michael Banner, *The Ethics of Everyday Life: Moral Theology, Social Anthropology and the Imagination of the Human*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.)

⁴⁰ *The Ethics of Everyday Life*, 86.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 85.

redemption. This, together with devotional trends emphasizing Christ's humanity, amounted to what Banner calls a 'schooling in compassion and empathy, and thus, arguably, an important moment in the history of both...witnessing and entering into the pain of Christ and his mother was expected to induce compunction, sorrow, compassion, a desire to imitate, resolution to follow, and so on.'⁴²

Banner then takes up a dialogue with a number of works which critically reflect on the meaning and role of compassion in contemporary liberal culture, in particular Didier Fassin's *Humanitarian Reason: A Moral History of the Present*,⁴³ and Susan Sontag's *Regarding the Pain of Others*.⁴⁴ In Banner's account, Fassin sees Christian influence in both the sacralization of life and the valorization of suffering, so that humanitarian government becomes a kind of political theology. He argues that there is 'something illusory in the reassurance which humanitarianism provides', affording only a simulacrum of genuine solidarity.⁴⁵ In his view, humanitarian activity still gives priority of care and security to aid workers – there is a hierarchy of concern – and it tends to depoliticize and de-historicize the contemporary world, rendering all those who suffer victims rather than agents, and finally failing to raise above a sort of narcissistic pitying of ourselves.⁴⁶ The key point Banner draws from Sontag's book arises from her reflection on the moral and psychological effects of our being flooded with distressing images of human suffering by the proliferating range of media available to us. Sontag pleads for the right context and reverential conditions to view certain images as secular icons.⁴⁷

⁴² *Ibid.*, 89.

⁴³ Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012. (French original 2010.)

⁴⁴ New York: Picador, 2004.

⁴⁵ *The Ethics of Everyday Life*, 95.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 97.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 99. As Banner notes, Grünewald's *Crucifixion* (which was part of a multi-panel altarpiece) indeed had 'the right context and reverential conditions' at the Monastery of St Antony's in Isenheim (Alsace) – it was 'only one part of a larger work; it was itself only revealed from time to time, and then in the context of the narrative of the Christian year' (99).

In response to these critical reflections on contemporary humanitarianism, Banner refers to the history of Christian identification with Christ's suffering, and explores how compassion with suffering which is informed by this history can avoid mere spectatorship. Here he invokes Foucault's notion of a 'technology of the self', looking at how one should form and govern oneself so as to truly 'seek the face of the Other' in Levinasian terms: 'The Christian practice of attending to Christ then, invites not just a more consistent humanitarianism, but one that overcomes the implicit disregard for the Other which construes compassion as a grant and not a recognition.'⁴⁸ Banner considers the *L'Arche* communities (founded by the French Canadian Catholic Jean Vanier) to be important examples of compassion that emphasize both what those who seek to assist the disabled have to give and also, crucially, what they have to receive from the disabled themselves.⁴⁹ He develops the theme of 'technologies of the self' by proposing ways in which Christian formation can resist the dangers of spectatorship through specific Christian practices, which give ritual and context to the encounter with images and narratives of suffering:

Most obviously perhaps in the use of the scriptures during Passiontide (in which congregations take on the voices of the characters in the story, including the voice of the crowd shouting 'crucify him' and so on), the users of these technologies of the self are invited to occupy a range of subject positions: as witness to the sufferings, but also in various alternating modes of attention, as causes of the suffering and even as victim. Thus we are required not merely and simply to attend to the other, but through certain shifts in perspective, to attend also to our construction of the other, and of ourselves in relation to that other, and to challenge those constructions through taking and occupying different perspectives upon them.⁵⁰

Banner concludes this chapter by noting both the effectiveness of the politics of compassion and the concerns about the moral adequacy of those politics. The challenge Christian ethics faces is:

⁴⁸ Ibid., 98.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 102-104

⁵⁰ Ibid., 102.

How can we imagine and practice a better humanitarianism, and how can the continued appropriation of the suffering of Christ, by means of various technologies of the self, sustain and advance such a practice?⁵¹

The works I have discussed in this essay demonstrate that the meaning of compassion is both profoundly important and strongly contested in public philosophy and theology, especially in relation to our response to the suffering of a world that is increasingly near to us through modern technology's compression of distance. What cannot be contested is the continuing power and resonance of Isaiah's image of the servant of the Lord, taken up by the writer of Matthew's Gospel as the programme of Jesus of Nazareth. As Spohn argues, through the analogical imagination this image of Jesus can inspire a pattern of virtue in our own very different world, responding to the question 'How do the paradigms, the normative patterns, of the life of Jesus empower the moral life?'⁵² In both Church and society, we are challenged by these Scriptural texts to imagine and live out forms of mercy and compassion that both safeguard and exceed justice.

25 John St.,
Bardwell Valley
NSW 2207, Australia
e-mail: robert.gascoigne@acu.edu.au

⁵¹ Ibid., 106.

⁵² *Go and Do Likewise*, 120.

Mirroring the Merciful God

An Exploration of Kasper's Relational Ontology

Randy J.C. Odchigue

One of the major theological contributions and the most discussed work on mercy in recent times is the book *Mercy: The Essence of the Gospel and the Key to Christian Life* authored by Cardinal Walter Kasper. He argues that mercy is the mirror of the Trinity. His project delves right into the heart of Christian theology in tackling how mercy needs to find itself at the very foundation of the God-discourse. In this article Randy J.C. Odchigue, from Saturnino Urios University, Philippines, explores Kasper's relational ontology as the lens from where he is able to argue that mercy is the mirror of the Trinity. Odchigue concludes that the theological project of Kasper as instantiated in his work on mercy is but part of a broader vision of the mutuality between dogmatic and pastoral theology in order to approximate God's word which is an address to people with flesh and blood.

Introduction

In his first *Angelus* message, Pope Francis made a reference to mercy as a catalyst for the world to become less cold and more just. This realization was articulated after the pontiff read the book *Mercy*¹ authored by Walter Kasper. The angelus message proved to be programmatic for his pontificate as Francis came to be known as the pope of mercy and compassion. In this contribution we will try to locate Kasper's plea of recalibrating theology in order to give space to mercy (the forgotten albeit all too important attribute of God) within his wider

¹ Walter Kasper, *Mercy: The Essence of the Gospel and the Key to Christian Life* (New York: Paulist Press, 2014).

theological framework while thematizing contentious points that critics made an issue with. We will try to explore his relational ontology as the lens from where he is able to argue that mercy is the mirror of the trinity.

A Plea for a Merciful God

“This book has done me so much good.”² This was how the newly elected Pope Francis describes the impact the book made on him. The pope appeared to have immediately resonated with Kasper’s work making it easy for anyone to see that “the central themes of this book prefigure key elements in Pope Francis’ vision of the church’ mission and his own pontificate.”³ When Francis describes the church as a “field hospital”—a space where wounds are healed and where hearts are warmed,⁴ one could immediately hear overtones and resonances with the project of Kasper.

Kasper’s book on mercy “seeks to engage rich and complex theological questions in ways that speak meaningfully to the experience of contemporary men and women.”⁵ Packing nine chapters, the project delves right into the heart of Christian theology in tackling how mercy needs to find itself at the very foundation of the God-discourse. It tackles the theological-philosophical issues behind questions such as: “How does God’s mercy comport with God’s justice? How does God’s mercy affect God’s salvific will? What is the relationship of God’s mercy to the trinitarian revelation of God in the Christian dispensation? Does the fact that God is merciful mean that God suffers, and if so, what about divine impassibility?”⁶

² Pope Francis, First Angelus. March 13, 2013.

³ William Madges, “Translator’s Preface,” Walter Kasper, *Mercy: The Essence of the Gospel and the Key to Christian Life* (New York: Paulist Press, 2014), ix.

⁴ Antonio Spadaro, “A Big Heart Open to God: The Exclusive Interview with Pope Francis,” *America*, September 30, 2013.

⁵ Kristin Colberg, “Review of *Mercy: The Essence of the Gospel and the Key to Christian Life*,” *Horizons* 41 (2014): 355-356.

⁶ Lawrence S. Cunningham, “Review of *Mercy: The Essence of the Gospel and the Key to Christian Life*,” *Christian Century*, January 21, 2015, 35.

In the tradition of Vatican II's *Gaudium et Spes*, Kasper begins the book by a cursory reading of the signs of times⁷ in the immediate past and present centuries whose afflictive historical events indicate a cry and call forth a response of mercy.⁸ The collective sufferings of humanity described by Kasper in concrete terms beg for an answer beyond the usual question asked in theodicy: "...it is not only a matter of asking, Does God exist? – as important as this question really is. It is a matter of the existence of a gracious God, a God who is 'rich in mercy' (Eph. 2:4), who consoles us so that we too can console others (2 Cor. 1:3f)."⁹ The question that Kasper wants to ask in the face of sadness, suffering and death is whether a merciful God exists. It is both a historical-pastoral and a fundamental-dogmatic theological question. It is a question that simultaneously relates to issues about the immanent and economic attributes of God. Kasper believes that this question is fundamental in our century. The church, its theology and the faith-option of its community need to take seriously this question and continue to rise to the ever-pressing occasion of addressing the gospel to the flesh and blood struggles of the world in general and of its faithful in particular. Not to do so will result to the church suffering the malady that Pope Francis calls self-referentiality.¹⁰

In the succeeding pages, Kasper delved not only with theological discourse but engaged philosophical trends that relate positively or negatively with theme of mercy tracing its foundations, development and the critique levelled against it in modernity. Worth mentioning is the fact that Kasper argues that the concepts of *Mitgefühl* (sympathy) and *Mitleid* (compassion) seem to provide points of commonality and

⁷ *Gaudium et Spes* § 4.

⁸ Walter Kasper, *Mercy: The Essence of the Gospel and the Key to Christian Life*, 1.

⁹ Walter Kasper, *Mercy: The Essence of the Gospel and the Key to Christian Life*, 5.

¹⁰ Pope Francis, *Bergoglio's Intervention: A Diagnosis of the Problems in the Church*. See, http://en.radiovaticana.va/storico/2013/03/27/bergoglios_intervention_a_diagnosis_of_the_problems_in_the_church/en1-677269. Accessed: 12 November 2015.

convergence among different religious traditions that “constitute the wisdom of humankind.”¹¹

Biblical Witness

After this analysis on the anthropological and cultural-religious dimensions of *Mitgefühl* and *Mitleid*, Kasper turns his attention to the concept of *Barmherzigkeit* from the witness of the Old Testament. Refuting the commonplace but narrow opinion that the God of the Old Testament is a vengeful and an angry God,¹² Kasper highlights the texts that speak about God’s mercy and God’s heart for his people. Of the texts and terms that relate to mercy, it is *hesed*¹³ – which means “unmerited loving kindness, friendliness, favour, and also divine grace and mercy”¹⁴ – that occupies the most important place. *Hesed* is a

¹¹ Walter Kasper, *Mercy: The Essence of the Gospel and the Key to Christian Life*, 38. Kasper does not deny that violence has been caused and even legitimized using religious discourse. He asserts, however, that this is a “misuse and an aberrant form of authentic religion.” *Ibid.*

¹² Kasper admits that there appears to be textual support of these claims. The imprecatory Psalms for example can be appealed to as textual support for this particular claim. To understand these Psalms Kasper suggests E. Zenger, “Fluchpsalmen,” *Lexicon für Theologie und Kirche*, 3rd ed., ed. Walter Kasper et al (Freiburg: Herder, 1993-2001), 3:1335f. But there are also verses in the Psalms that speaks about *hesed* as a possession; attribute or expression of God, see for example: Psalms: 6:4; 18:50; 21:7; 25:6; 31:7, 16, 21; 32:10; 33:18, 22; 36:7, 10; 42:8; 44:26; 48:9; 51:1; 52:8; 59:10, 17; 66:20; 85:7; 86:13; 89:28, 33; 90:14; 94:18; 107:8, 15, 21, 31; 109:41, 76, 88, 124, 149, 159; 143:8, 12; 144:2; 146:11.

¹³ Example: Gen 19:19; 39:21; Exodus 15:13; Deut 7:9, 12; 2 Sam 7:15; 22:51; 1 Kings 3:6; 8:23; 1 Chron 17:13; 2 Chron 1:8; 6:14; Ezra 7:28; 9:9; Neh 1:5; 9:32; Job 10:12; 37:13; Ruth 1:8; 2:20; Jer 31:3; Dan 9:4; Mic 7:20; texts that show affection of Israel for Yahweh expressed as *hesed*: 2 Chron 32:32; Neh 13:14; Isa 57:1; Jer 2:2; Jon 2:8. *Hesed* is also bestowed on those in need and the lowly: Genesis 24:49; 47:29; Josh 2:14; 1 Kings 20:31; Prov 3:3; 11:17; 14:22; 16:6; 20:28; 21:21; Job 20:6, 14; Psa 109:12, 16; Isa 16:5; Hos 4:1; 6:4, 6; 10:12; 12:6; Mic 6:8; Zech 7:9; Dan 1:9. *Hesed and emet*: Gen 24:27; Ex 34:6; 2 Sam 2:6; 15:20; Psalms: 25:10; 26:3; 40:10, 11; 57:3; 61:7; 85:10; 86:15; 89:14; 115:1; 117:2; 138:2; Micah 7:20.

¹⁴ Walter Kasper, *Mercy: The Essence of the Gospel and the Key to Christian Life*, 43.

relational and dynamic category that does not only describe a particular disposition but an on-going posture and attitude of God in relation to humanity.¹⁵ This relates to Kasper's argument that that God's name – Yahweh (Ex. 3:4) – that the Greeks translated "I am the one who am" is better understood (or translated) from Buber's perspective as "I will be present as the one who will be there."¹⁶ Kasper asserts that the Greek translation emphasizes the being of God as influenced by the philosophical tradition and linguistic articulation of their context. The Jewish sources¹⁷ Kasper refers to seem to lean towards the meaning that the revelation of God's name – Yahweh – is already a revelation of divine mercy. "God's relation to Moses in the Burning Bush is not "I am," but I am *with* you. I am *for* you. I am going with you."¹⁸ What this means among other things for Kasper is that Mercy goes hand in hand with the other ways in which God reveals himself in the Old Testament for example in terms of God's *qados* that describes God's radical alterity and superiority that resists evil and challenges his people to do what is right and just (Amos 5:7, 24; 6:12).¹⁹ It appears that it is in this sense that Kasper maintains that "mercy is the fulfilment of justice."²⁰

The New Testament witness of the gospel of Jesus Christ is can be, according to Kasper, encapsulated as a message of mercy. The words and deeds of Jesus reveal the Kingdom of God that calls for a radical re-ordering of religious, socio-cultural of relationships with God and

¹⁵ Walter Kasper, *Mercy: The Essence of the Gospel and the Key to Christian Life*. 43.

¹⁶ See, Martin Buber, *Moses the Revelation and the Covenant* (New York: Harper & Row, 1958), 52-55; Walter Kasper, *Mercy: The Essence of the Gospel and the Key to Christian Life*, 48.

¹⁷ For example, *Die fünf Bücher der Weisung*: Verdeutscht von M. Buber gem. M. F. Rosenzweig (Heidelberg: Schneider, 1981).

¹⁸ Walter Kasper, "Merciful God, Merciful Church: An Interview with Cardinal Walter Kasper," *Commonweal*, June 13, 2014, 14.

¹⁹ *Mishpat* (justice) and *tsedeq* (righteousness): Jer. 9:24; Psalms. 101:1; Psalm. 36:10.

²⁰ Walter Kasper, "Merciful God, Merciful Church," 15.

with each other – within the ambit of mercy²¹ as the highest manifestation of justice. Kasper emphasizes that “our life on earth is directed by our one Father in heaven. We may detect the Father’s hand in everything, we know ourselves are secure with him in every situation, and we may call on him as our Father in our every need. Thus, we don’t live in a boundless, unfeeling, and fatherless cosmos.”²² Jesus reveals the merciful Father in a very special through his parables which are transformative narratives of people who were once broken and lost but have been found and restored by the God who is rich in mercy.²³ In the parable of the prodigal son (Lk. 15:11-37) is a description of the Father’s mercy *par excellence*. Kasper reflects: “The Father’s mercy in this parable is the higher form of justice. We can also say: mercy is the most perfect realization of justice. Divine mercy (*Barmherzigkeit*) leads human beings to a ‘return to the truth about themselves.’ God’s mercy (*Erbarmen*) does not humiliate the person.”²⁴ The words and deeds of Jesus that definitively reveal this merciful God are accomplished with finality in his sacrificial death on behalf of all on the cross. The salvation through the cross and the resurrection is God’s hope that shines through every human incapacity²⁵ communicated through the person of Jesus Christ. Kasper’s point in relation to the preceding paragraphs is summarized in the following words: “To believe in love and to make it the embodiment and sum of our understanding of existence has far-reaching, indeed revolutionary consequences for our image of God, for our self-understanding and for our life praxis, for

²¹ Lk. 4:18-19; Matt. 11:28-29; Mk. 1:41; Matt. 14:14; Mk. 6:34.

²² Walter Kasper, *Mercy: The Essence of the Gospel and the Key to Christian Life*, 69.

²³ See for example, Luke 10:25-37 (the parable of the Good Samaritan); Luke 15:11-32 (the parable of the prodigal son);

²⁴ Walter Kasper, *Mercy: The Essence of the Gospel and the Key to Christian Life*, 71.

²⁵ For a theological anthropological exploration on the topic of human capacity and incapacity see, John Zizioulas, “Human Capacity and Human Incapacity: A Theological Exploration of Personhood,” in *Scottish Journal of Theology* 28 (1975): 401-48.

ecclesial praxis and for our conduct in the world. Love, which is proven in mercy, can and must become the foundation of a new culture for our lives, the church, and for society.”²⁶

Systematic Reflections

The scriptural exploration of Kasper on the theme of mercy seemed to have strengthened the plea of Kasper in the methodological tradition of Vatican II in terms of: *ressourcement* and *aggiornamento*²⁷ – of renewed reflection on the church by recuperating and re-appropriating the primary sources of our faith. As a consequence of this hermeneutical posture it all but comes to the challenge of re-calibrating and re-inscribing the question of the doctrine of God whose contextual articulation was arrived at through the influence of the Greek ontological categories, namely God is absolute and so on. Kasper however thinks that the biblical understanding is much deeper and more personal.²⁸ The influence of the ontological understanding in theological formulations is so strong in that “justice became the main attribute of God, not mercy.”²⁹ Following his Aristotelian and Thomistic theological leanings,³⁰ Kasper argues: “Thomas Aquinas clearly said that mercy is much more fundamental because God does not answer to the demands of our rules. Mercy is the faithfulness of God to his own being as love. For God is love. And mercy is the love revealed to us in the concrete deeds

²⁶ Walter Kasper, *Mercy: The Essence of the Gospel and the Key to Christian Life*, 82.

²⁷ On John XXIII’s call for *aggiornamento* see, Andrea Riccardi, “The Tumultuous Opening Days of the Council,” *History of Vatican II: Vol. II: The formation of the Council’s Identity: First Period and Intersession October 1962-September 1963*, ed. Giuseppe Alberigo & Joseph Komonchak (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1996), 1-68.

²⁸ Walter Kasper, “Merciful God, Merciful Church: An Interview with Cardinal Walter Kasper,” 14.

²⁹ Walter Kasper, “Merciful God, Merciful Church: An Interview with Cardinal Walter Kasper,” 14.

³⁰ On the reference to Kasper’s Aristotelian methodology see, Maureen Junker-Kenny, “The Church of Vatican II: German Theologians in Debate with Cardinal Ratzinger,” in *Doctrine and Life* 55 (2005): 21-28

and words. So mercy becomes not only the central attribute of God, but also the key of Christian existence. Be merciful as God is merciful.”³¹

Kasper was however criticized on his systematic reflection on the attributes of God understandably because it can be perceived recuperating concepts of *Mitgefühl* and *Mitleid* can seem to bring back the debates on the issues centered around patipassianism and divine impassibility. One published critique came from a review written by Daniel Moloney on March 2015. Moloney appeared to take issue with what Kasper contends that the “mercy surpasses and goes beyond justice.”³² Moloney argues: Mercy is a virtue that requires someone who needs mercy, someone with some sort of sin or other imperfection. The Father is not merciful to the Holy Spirit. He loves the Holy Spirit, but there’s nothing imperfect about the Holy Spirit so that he needs the Father’s mercy. For mercy to be essential to God, as Kasper holds, it would mean that God could not exist without -expressing mercy. But since God does not show mercy to himself, it would not be possible for him to exist without there also being sinners in need of his mercy - and that notion is absurd.”³³ And because of this Moloney maintains that it is with good reason that “tradition has not made mercy essential to God.” Moloney judges it orthodox when mercy is understood as an externalization of the essence of love and as an expression of this essence. The problem comes when according to him, Kasper starts asserting that forgiveness belongs to the essence of God or that it is a perfection of God’s essence or when the Cardinal argues “that love “surpasses” justice or “goes beyond” justice, either in God or in creatures, since God is both of these things, essentially and completely.”³⁴ Moloney then asserts “that divine justice must be more fundamental than divine mercy, because justice is essential to God

³¹ Walter Kasper, “Merciful God, Merciful Church: An Interview with Cardinal Walter Kasper,” 14

³² Daniel Moloney, “What Mercy Is: A Review of Mercy,” <http://www.firstthings.com/article/2015/03/what-mercy-is>. Accessed: 13 November 2015.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*

and mercy is not. But God's justice is not more fundamental than his love, since both are essential - God is Love (and loving), and God is Justice (and just). This suggests that there must be some way of talking about love and justice - whether human or divine - such that they are at least not contraries; ideally, the concepts would be defined so that every action that is just is also loving and every action that is loving is also just."³⁵ Moloney takes also issue with what he perceives as Kasper's interchangeable use of 'love', 'goodness' and 'mercy' without properly distinguishing which of them are properly divine attributes or not. Moloney then launched a reflection about the difference between apologetics and dogmatic theology: "Dogmatic theology is dogmatic precisely insofar as it is not dialectical, or not in response to the pressing or fashionable questions of the day. Apologetics should change and adapt in response to the questions of the audience and the particular themes of the age, but dogmatic theology is deliberately distinguished from apologetics in its concern for timeless truths. Theologians usually misstep when they react to current moods, unless it is to take today's questions as an opportunity to think about eternal truths."³⁶

From the critique of Moloney, it appears that several issues are at stake. First the criticism illustrates how important it is to clarify the understanding of mercy. Is mercy understood from a binarial oppositional perspective against justice? Second, Moloney's argument brings to the fore the question of divine attributes and third, the methodological questions of whether dogmatic statements or assertions should be untouched with historical vicissitudes and whether dogmatic and apologetics be treated as two separate realms of theology; and if not which of them takes precedence? Should Apologetics be simply an exercise of applying "timeless" truths to particular individual situations; or should historical engagement be allowed to uncover aspects of the timeless truths which need to be articulated when the signs of the times demand it in reconciliation with what has been articulated in the past dogmatic statements?

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*

And finally, in reflecting the divine attributes, it seems to be important to remember that one should not neglect the *norma normans non normata* – the witness of the Holy Scriptures. It appeared that Moloney did not at the very least make an explicit reference or any comment in relation to the biblical sources that Kasper utilized in his book.

After Moloney's critique, Kasper wrote his response published in the same journal (*First Things*) on March 23, 2015. At the outset Kasper immediately points out that it is "theological nonsense" to bring truth and mercy in contraposition: "Mercy itself is revealed truth intimately connected with all other revealed truths. The message of mercy would collapse without the truth that God is love (1 John 4:8, 16), without the Incarnation, the Cross and the Resurrection of our Lord and many other."³⁷

Kasper then proceeds to locate his discourse on mercy by pointing out that it was John XXIII who first made mention about the importance of the medicine of mercy followed by St. John Paul II in his encyclical *Dives in Misericordia* and with Benedict XVI in his encyclical *Deus Caritas Est*. Kasper then defends his position that the neglect of the attribute of mercy is levelled specifically at the methodology that became customarily employed in neo-scholastic manuals.

Kasper then focused on the question that Moloney takes issue namely the precedence of mercy over justice. As a support to his argument, Kasper offers Thomas Aquinas' *Summa* specifically *quaestio* 21 "*De iustitia et misericordia*." Kasper argues: "there in articles 3 and 4 he can find what Thomas thinks about mercy as the greatest attribute of God, its precedence over against justice and that mercy presupposes justice and is its plenitude."³⁸ Furthermore, concerning the issue of whether mercy is part of the inner nature of God, Kasper contends that any theologian who thinks in the tradition of Thomas Aquinas

³⁷ Walter Kasper, "Cardinal Kasper Responds to First Things Review of 'Mercy,' *First Things*, March 23, 2015.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

“knows very well how to distinguish between the inner nature of God and the attributes of God which are related to the acts of God ad extra. The latter aren’t a part but a mirror of God’s inner nature and ... mercy is a mirror of the Trinity. Thomas, following Anselm of Canterbury, goes so far as to say that mercy in salvation history is God’s justice to himself and God’s historical faithfulness (in Hebrew: *emet*, truth) to his nature, which is love.”³⁹ This position of Kasper seems to be supported by the reading of John Paul II in his encyclical *Dives in Misericordia*: “... mercy is in a certain sense contrasted with God’s justice, and in many cases is shown to be not only more powerful than that justice but also more profound. Even the Old Testament teaches that, although justice is an authentic virtue in man, and in God signifies transcendent perfection nevertheless love is “greater” than justice: greater in the sense that it is primary and fundamental. Love, so to speak, conditions justice and, in the final analysis, justice serves love. The primacy and superiority of love vis-a-vis justice - this is a mark of the whole of revelation - are revealed precisely through mercy.”⁴⁰

After establishing the theological content of his response, Kasper proceeds by pointing out some methodological differences with Moloney. Kasper clarifies that he agrees with Moloney’s perspective on dogmatic theology’s function of dealing with eternal truths if by that the latter “understands eternal truths in the sense that there are confession of truth eschatologically valid once for all time, never out of fashion but always worthy to be reminded of, confessed and more deeply reflected upon by the people of God in order to discover always anew their eternal newness.”⁴¹

Manifesting his Aristotelian philosophical leanings, Kasper then argues that truths concerning things eternal are not abstract or cut-off from history. He argues that the confession of eschatological truths are mediated by concrete events: “they are revealed by God’s historical

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Dives in Misericordia* § 5.

⁴¹ Walter Kasper, “Cardinal Kasper Responds to First Things Review of “Mercy,” 3/11. Kasper also cites the encyclical of Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 11.

and dialogical self-revelation by words and deeds, and in the fullness of time by God's eternal Son becoming flesh in a certain time and space of history; in Church history under the guidance of the Holy Spirit they have to be witnessed to and developed through the living tradition."⁴²

Kasper concludes that eternal truths have a historical index and a dialogical character. Distancing himself from Moloney's position, Kasper argues that dogmatic theology cannot explain and articulate these eternal truths without relating them to context. Dissociating theology from context runs the risk of losing contact with human history and human life. It seems that Moloney's position is careful with the opposite danger of theology functionalized by ideology or co-opted by the ebb and tide of the fluidity of the context and loses its specific transcendent quality.

In Moloney's rebuttal to Kasper's reply, it seems that the former was not fully satisfied with the answer of the latter in relation to the question of whether mercy is integral to God's essence. Moloney also defends his position that "if there's anything in theology that does approach such Platonic levels of stability, it ought to be the theology regarding God's eternal attributes."⁴³

While the debate clarified the various positions of the authors, it also made clear that there were manifest differences between the two. The debate first and foremost clarified the position that the inner nature of God has to be distinguished with the attributes which relates to the acts of God *ad extra*. While Moloney is not particularly convinced with how Kasper articulated this point, it seems that the latter is very aware that failing to see such distinction is an elementary theological mistake. While different in formulation, it seems that the two authors agree that these distinctions must be held steadfastly. This of course

⁴² Walter Kasper, "Cardinal Kasper Responds to First Things Review of 'Mercy,'" 4/11. On the point of the development of the living tradition Kasper refers the Vatican II document *Dei Verbum* § 2, 8.

⁴³ Daniel Moloney, "Cardinal Kasper Responds to First Things Review of 'Mercy,'" 9/11.

has implications on the debate of divine impassibility which thankfully this distinction is able to avert.

There is also a difference of position regarding the relationship between mercy and justice. On one hand,⁴⁴ Moloney argues that the construction of mercy surpassing justice can be formulated in an orthodox manner when God's mercy is compared to justice in political usage. Kasper, on the other hand, believes that mercy as manifestation of God's love surpasses justice as seen in the revelation witnessed by the scriptures. This point of Kasper seems to be in keeping with, for example, *Dives in Misericordia* and the reading of scriptures favoured in the same encyclical.⁴⁵ At the very least John Paul II leans on the interpretation that justice and mercy need not be understood as binary opposites but as intimately related even though different.⁴⁵ It would have been interesting to see if the debate included components of the scriptures especially as how the two authors would appropriate the texts, the parables and the who Jesus narrative in relation to the question of mercy. Kasper illustrated these in his book but Moloney has yet to see his reading and/or hermeneutics of the scriptural witness in relation to mercy. The debate also manifested aspects of theological methodology that clearly manifested the difference between the two theologians. In the next section, this paper would like to focus on the methodology of Kasper to better understand his position.

Kasper's Methodology

One of the most important methodological differences between the two authors is on the relationship between dogmatic and apologetic theology. I believe the core issue here is on the question of the

⁴⁴ See, *Dives in Miserecordia* § 4, 5, 7, 8.

⁴⁵ *Dives in Misericordia* § 4: "Mercy differs from justice, but is not in opposition to it, if we admit in the history of man - as the Old Testament precisely does-the presence of God, who already as Creator has linked Himself to His creature with a particular love. Love, by its very nature, excludes hatred and ill - will towards the one to whom He once gave the gift of Himself: Nihil odisti eorum quae fecisti, "you hold nothing of what you have made in abhorrence." John Paul II quotes Wis. 11:24 on this point.

relationship between history and dogma. Moloney's contends that: "Dogmatic theology is dogmatic precisely insofar as it's not dialectical, or not in response to the pressing or fashionable questions of the day. Apologetics should change and adapt in response to the questions of the audience and the particular themes of the age, but dogmatic theology is deliberately distinguished from apologetics in its concern for timeless truths. Theologians usually misstep when they react to current moods, unless it is to take today's questions as an opportunity to think about eternal truths."⁴⁶

It seems to me that the statement above relates to the question of religion's the kernel and the husk that has a long history of debate as for example shown in the work of Ernst Troeltsch⁴⁷ until today.⁴⁸ The concern of Moloney is shared by theologians who seem to be worried that the contemporary focus on the search for freedom and autonomy of the historical subject "does seem to be attacking Christian faith; it seems to be emptying it of content and making it relative. Christianity seems to be abolishing itself in modern historical thinking."⁴⁹ It seems, however that for Kasper the radical historical outlook might present a new opportunity for a deeper understanding of faith.⁵⁰ I believe the critique of Moloney is based on the reading that Kasper's position would appear to be supportive of a wide scale accommodation of the

⁴⁶ Daniel Moloney, "What Mercy is?" *First Things*, <http://www.firstthings.com/article/2015/03/what-mercy-is>. Accessed: 15 November 2015.

⁴⁷ See for example, Ernst Troeltsch, *The Absoluteness of Christianity and the History of Religions* (Tübingen: Verlag von J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1929).

⁴⁸ Confer, the articles in the volume, Terrence Merrigan and Jacques Haers eds, *The Myriad Christ: Plurality and the Quest for Unity in Contemporary Christology* (Leuven: Peeters, 2000). For example, Peter De Mey, "Ernst Troeltsch: A Moderate Pluralist? An Evaluation of His Reflections on the Place of Christianity among the Other Religions," in *The Myriad Christ: Plurality and the Quest for Unity in Contemporary Christology*, Terrence Merrigan and Jacques Haers eds, (Leuven: Peeters, 2000), 349-380.

⁴⁹ Walter Kasper, *Introduction to Christian Faith* (New York: Paulist, 1980), 10.

⁵⁰ Walter Kasper, *Introduction to Christian Faith*, 158-159.

radically historical outlook of modernity.⁵¹ According to Kasper: "Reality does not have a history... It is itself history through and through... Historical events are theologically not mere stirrings on the surface of an eternal ground of being, not a fleeting shadow of the eternal, but the real 'nature' of things themselves. There is no metaphysical structure of order to be disentangled from all the details of history and salvation history."⁵² Today, Kasper believes, "we have reached the end of metaphysics in its classical form."⁵³ As such, the end of the "serviceability of a concept of God" that is at the basis of this metaphysics is also reached. Thus, Kasper asserts that the ultimate and highest reality is not substance but relation⁵⁴ and that the traditional ontology of substance "must be replaced by relational thinking."⁵⁵

We believe that Kasper's thinking is not just an accommodation in order to baptize modernity into Christianity. He believes that the shifts in history provide a new opportunity to articulate a faith that is relevant to the context.⁵⁶ It is therefore understandable that Kasper's book on mercy begins with the existential experience of the previous and the present century marred by tragedies and wars that desperately yearn for the presence of the God of mercy and compassion.⁵⁷

The centrality of history and experience in theology is not a unique recent development. Kasper believes that they have been already in Christianity and that they are Christian in origin in spite of the fact that these elements had been obscured with the classical metaphysics. The modern and postmodern decline of this classical metaphysics is not necessarily destructive of Christianity. Such metaphysics has not been

⁵¹ Hunter Brown, "Kasper, Modernity and Postmodernity," in *Journal of Dharma* 12 (1997): 209-224, 211.

⁵² Walter Kasper, *Introduction to Christian Faith*, 156, 165.

⁵³ Walter Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ*, trans. Matthew O'Connell (New York: Crossroad, 2005), 184.

⁵⁴ Walter Kasper, *Theology and the Church*, 29.

⁵⁵ Walter Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ*, 63.

⁵⁶ Walter Kasper, *Introduction to Christian Faith*, 159.

⁵⁷ Walter Kasper, *Mercy: The Essence of the Gospel and the Key to Christian Life*, 1-15.

the foundation of theology and the importance of the subject and of history has long informed Christian thought.⁵⁸ Kasper argues that the metaphysical framework was adopted by the Church as a form of *aggiornamento*.⁵⁹ Thus, in the question of modernism, the church cannot return to its ghetto mentality of the 19th century.⁶⁰ The church is once again challenged to re-contextualize itself. Kasper correctly argues that the use of Hellenistic categories “represents not a Hellenization but a de-Hellenization of Christianity.”⁶¹ The distinction for example between *ousia* and *hypostasis* “meant breaking through Greek ontological thinking towards a personal way of thinking. Not nature, but person was the final and supreme reality.”⁶² This methodological statement seems to be what is at the background when Kasper for example argues that: “...within the parameters of the metaphysical attributes of God, there is scarcely a room for a concept of mercy, but rather from the historical self-revelation of God.”⁶³ The plea of Kasper towards the necessity of thinking about the doctrine of God coincides with his plea towards a shift towards a relational ontology – one that is capable of dialoguing with the existential concerns of the world and one that is concretely attuned to historical-scriptural-dialogical aspects of the Christian faith. This means further that foundationalist epistemology has to give way to epistemic categories of relationality.⁶⁴

⁵⁸ Hunter Brown, “Kasper, Modernity and Postmodernity,” 213.

⁵⁹ Walter Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ*, 180-182.

⁶⁰ Walter Kasper, “The Church and Contemporary Pluralism,” *That They May All be One* (London: Burns and Oates, 2004), 183. Kasper proposes that the only way to go in this process is through dialogue. “Today, the Church and modernity...are no longer adversaries...The Church does not question empirical pluralism; indeed she acknowledges its right, although at the same time she questions and wants to help in preventing and overcoming the dangers immanent in ideological pluralism.” Walter Kasper, “The Church and Contemporary Pluralism,” 185.

⁶¹ Walter Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ*, 182.

⁶² Walter Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ*, 183.

⁶³ Walter Kasper, *Mercy: The Essence of the Gospel and the Key to Christian Life*, 11.

⁶⁴ Walter Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ*, 63.

When Kasper speaks about mercy as the mirror of the Trinity, it appears that he does so from the perspective of his relational ontology that characterizes his theological articulation of the trinity as persons-in-communion. In his fundamental theological writings, Kasper wants to locate the question of Trinity in relation to history and the sphere of human experience. The basis of the doctrine is solely the history of God's relationship with human beings in the "historical self-revelation of the Father through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit."⁶⁵ This doctrine also answers the primordial human question: the question of unity in multiplicity, "of unity that does not absorb multiplicity but turns it into a unified whole, a unity that is not impoverishment but fullness and completion."⁶⁶ Kasper argues that this specifically Christian answer to the question of the ultimate ground of unity and wholeness in reality is not a scheme or an abstract principle but something personal: one God in three persons. Kasper argues that the church holds fast to the unity in God not despite the doctrine of the Trinity but rather thanks to the Christian confession of the Triune God. "The most profound justification for the fact that the affirmation of God's oneness does not eliminate but in a certain sense includes multiplicity lies in the trinitarian confession of one God in three persons."⁶⁷ The two concepts that are instrumental in explicating this point are that of *perichoresis* and of person. *Perichoresis* is taken to mean the being-in-one-another and the interpenetration of the three hypostases in the Trinity. This is supported, Kasper argues, in scripture ("I and the Father are one"⁶⁸) and in tradition, as for example as described in the formula of reciprocal coinherence in the Council of Florence: "On account of this unity the Father is wholly in the Son and wholly in the Holy Spirit; the Son wholly in the Father and wholly in the Holy Spirit; the Holy Spirit wholly in the Father and wholly in the Son."⁶⁹ The notion of *perichoresis* is very

⁶⁵ Walter Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ*, 237.

⁶⁶ Walter Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ*, 238.

⁶⁷ Walter Kasper, "Jesus Christ: God's Final Word," *Communio* 28 (Spring 2001): 61-71, 69.

⁶⁸ John 10:30. Cf. 14:9ff; 17:21. (RSV).

⁶⁹ Heinrich Denzinger and Adolfus Schönmetzer (eds.). *Enchiridion symbolorum, definitionum et declarationum de rebus fidei et morum*

important for Kasper because it wards off both modalism (three modalities of the same divine deity) and tritheism (three substantial deities). *Perichoresis* has both a speculative and pastoral significance. The perichoretic coinherence in the Trinity provides a model for the relationship between Jesus and human beings; between human beings themselves and between human beings and God.⁷⁰ In all these cases, *perichoresis* means that “unity and independence increase in direct and not in inverse proportion.” In axiomatic terms, the greater unity, the greater independence. This is the root of Kasper’s idea of the non-opposition between theonomy and human autonomy. Succinctly put: “The unity with God that is established in Jesus neither absorbs nor dissolves the human person; it means, rather, an abiding distinction and thus is the basic for authentic independence and freedom.”⁷¹

Corollary to this is Kasper’s reflection on the concept of person, which in the modern period was transformed from its ontological to its psychological connotation, being defined, as the self-conscious individual personality in whom freedom resides. Kasper defines his appropriation of the category of person against the positions of Barth (mode of being) and Rahner (three distinct manners of subsisting). Kasper believes that both positions set off against each other the subjectivity of God and of the human being. “While the subjectivity of man is in danger of being lost in Barth’s thematizing of God as absolute subject in his theology of the Trinity, it is the Thou of God that is in danger of being lost in Rahner’s thematizing of the subjectivity of man in his theology of the Trinity.”⁷² Kasper overcomes these pitfalls in two moves. In the first instance, he aligns himself with personalist thinkers such as Buber, Ebner, Rosenzweig in their position that persons only exist in relation in an I-Thou-We dynamic. Analogically applied to the Trinity, this means

(Barcelona: Herder, 1965) § 1331. Joseph Neuner and Jacques Dupuis (eds.), *The Christian Faith in the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church* (New York: Alba House, 1982) § 326.

⁷⁰ Walter Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ*, 284.

⁷¹ Walter Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ*, 284.

⁷² Walter Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ*, 302.

that the divine persons are not only in relation but are relation, "The divine persons are not only in dialogue but they are dialogue."⁷³ This means that in the definition of the Trinity as relationality, it now becomes possible to speak of God as communion of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit – as communion-unity in love.

The understanding of God as communion-unity not only provides a model for the unity of the church and for human beings but is the condition of the possibility of their salvation. Along similar lines, Struys argues: "if God is not to be understood as a solitary narcissistic being, then God can only be conceived as co-existent (relational)... That co-existence within God's essence is the necessary condition for the realization of the salvation of humankind, i.e. the freedom and transcendence of humankind."⁷⁴ This unity is not a rigid, monolithic and tyrannical uniformity.⁷⁵ "God's unity is fullness and even overflowing fullness of selfless self-giving and bestowing, of loving self-outpouring; it is a unity that does not exclude but includes; it is a living, loving being with and for one another."⁷⁶ Understood from this ontology, God's being can be thus defined a Triune Being in love.⁷⁷ One can now see why Kasper is able to argue that: "the trinity of God is therefore the inner presupposition of God's mercy, just as conversely, his mercy is the revelation and mirror of his essence. In God's mercy, the eternal, self-communicating love of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is mirrored and revealed."⁷⁸

⁷³ Walter Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ*, 290.

⁷⁴ Kristof Struys, "Relationship in God and The Salvation of Humankind," *Theology and Conversation*, eds. J. Haers and P. De Mey (Leuven:Peeters, 2003) 227-238, 238.

⁷⁵ Kristof Struys, "Relationship in God and The Salvation of Humankind," 238.

⁷⁶ Walter Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ*, 307.

⁷⁷ Walter Kasper, *Mercy: The Essence of the Gospel and the Key to Christian Life*, 92.

⁷⁸ Walter Kasper, *Mercy: The Essence of the Gospel and the Key to Christian Life*, 93.

Conclusion

The relational ontology of Kasper vis-à-vis the trinity provides a lens from which one is able to understand the historical and existential concern that is at the center of his book on Mercy. If one looks at his theological method, he seemed to identify himself with the Catholic Tübingen school. Kasper believes that there are three pillars on which theology survives. 1) “Theology must belong within the context of the church; 2) Theology must be scholarly and scientific and 3) Theology must be praxis orientated, and open to the questions of the time.”⁷⁹ There is much threshing out that needs to be done as far as the implications of his method are concerned to different issues and contexts.⁸⁰ Upon deeper reflection one can say that the theological project of Kasper as instantiated in his work on mercy is but part of a broader vision of the mutuality between dogmatic and pastoral theology in order to approximate God’s word which is an address to flesh and blood people.⁸¹ Kasper’s theological method is an attempt that is simultaneously a challenge for theology to find a way in order to articulate a God of love and mercy who wills the salvation of all⁸² and reaches out to the last, the least and lost in order to restore and to heal.

⁷⁹ Walter Kasper, *Theology and the Church* (New York: Crossroad, 1989) 5.

⁸⁰ I have done some incipient efforts of reflecting on the relevance of Kasper’s methodology to the Asian context in, Randy J.C. Odchigie, “Re-visiting Kasper-Ratzinger Debate: The Relevance of Kasper’s Theological Method to Asian Context,” in *Revisiting Vatican II 50 Years of Renewal*, Vol. II, Shaji George Kochutara, ed. (Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2015), 107-120.

⁸¹ See, Walter Kasper, “Merciful God, Merciful Church,” 15.

⁸² 1 Tim. 2:4.

God's *Hesed* in the Bible: Word, Action and Re-action

Martin Antony

God's mercy and justice are often understood as if they are binary opposites. It implies that a merciful God cannot be just and vice-versa. But this article interprets the meaning of God's *hesed* in such a way as to show how God's mercy leads to God's justice which further leads to God's mercy. The story of Cain and Abel and the saga of patriarch Abraham are examined in some detail to illustrate this claim. For, as the author rightly argues, God's nature will be made clear fully only in relation to somebody. The author of this work, Fr. Martin Antony O.deM, is a member of the Order of Our Lady of Mercy. Currently he teaches Bible at Jyotir Bhavan, Institute of Theology and Spirituality, in Kalamassery, Kerala, India.

Introduction

"If you are not able to read all basing on a subject, you may feel guilty; and if you are able to read all basing on a subject, you may also feel frustrated." This is the fourth commandment in the ten commandments for bible students given by Luís Alonso Schökel.¹ To do a study on the 'mercy of God' is really a herculean task, because this subject is as vast as an ocean. The more you try to take water from it, the more you will see remaining there. May be that is why Karen Armstrong defines biblical studies as 'wrestling with God and Scripture.'² We know that Jacob's wrestling with a mysterious stranger

¹ Quoted by Gianfranco Ravasi, *Mattutino*, Casale Monferrato, Edizioni Piemme Spa, 1993, p. 172.

² Karen Armstrong, *In the Beginning, A New Interpretation of Genesis*, London, Vintage Books, 2011, p. 3.

at the wild gorge of the Jab'bok stream on the borders of Canaan. It is one of the most haunting scenes in Genesis. It was a moment of crisis in Jacob's life. He was returning to his homeland after an absence of twenty years. He was afraid of Esau, his brother, who would kill him when they meet the next day. That night he took his wives, children and maids, and sent them across the stream, and he camped alone at the stream-bank. There, "a man wrestled with him until daybreak." This wrestling brought a new name to Jacob, but he was not allowed to get the name of the wrestler. "Then Jacob asked him, 'Please tell me your name.' But he said, 'Why is it that you ask my name?' And there he blessed him. So Jacob called the place Penî'el, saying, 'I have seen God face to face, and yet my life is preserved.'" (Gen 32:29-30).

Reading the Bible is like a mysterious wrestling with God. It will not provide you knowledge, rather it will bring you to a realm of experience, an experience which is always painful. It is an experience which will always shake our own being. One who wrestles with God may not get the name of God, instead he may realize who he is. Jacob does not get the name of the wrestler, but he gets a new name, 'Israel,' which can be translated as 'one who struggles with God' or even 'God-fighter.' At the same time let us not neglect Jacob's prayer for remembering God's many expressions of *hesed* in the past before he enters himself into wrestling. He pleads with God to continue the commitment of *hesed* in protecting him from any harm Esau may intend (Gen 32:9-12). And later Esau's favourable response to Jacob is evidence not only of God's *hesed* toward Jacob but of Esau's mercy toward his brother.

Any study on the name or characteristics of God will not help us to know who He is, but it will help us to know and realize who we are in relation to Him and to others. So to study the merciful face of God in the Bible is equal to meditate upon the mercy-elements of our own existence.

Looking into history in relation to God we can define it as a colourful experience of God's presence in various realms and spheres of man's life. In the history of the biblical world, man's experience of God is very closely interconnected to his daily life. There he experienced Him

as creator (Gen 1:26-31) destroyer (Gen 6:7), friend of the family (Gen 12:1-50:26), liberator (Ex 1:1-15:21), lawgiver (Ex 15:22-40:38), liege (Deut 4:32-40), conqueror (Josh 8:1-35), father (2Sam 7:1-17), arbiter (1King 21-22), executioner (Is 1:1-31), holy one (Is 54:4-8), lover (Song 1-8), husband (Is 62:4-5, Hos 2), counselor (Ps 1, Is 9:6), guarantor (Pro 16:1-4), fiend (Job 1-2), sleeper (Ps 44:24), bystander,³ recluse (Job 3), puzzle (Eccl 7:13-18), absence (Lam 1), ancient of days (Dan 2:20-23), scroll (Neh. 8-10), perpetual round (1Chr 29:10-19), etc.... But behind all these personified as well as non-personified experiences of God, the underlining principle which the Israelite enjoyed was his unrelenting love, that is, *hesed*

1. Concept of Mercy in the Bible

The concept of 'mercy' in the Bible has a long and rich history. It is interconnected with the God-experience of people in their social, communal, individual and interior realms of life.⁴ "Mercy is the heart of the Biblical message, not by undercutting justice, but by surpassing it. The Old Testament speaks of God as a gracious and merciful God (Exod 34:6; Ps 86:15; etc.) and the New Testament calls God 'the Father of mercies and the God of all consolations' (2 Cor 1:3; cf Eph 2:4).⁵ The typical terms which signifies mercy are *Hesed* (steadfast love), and *Rahamim* (mercy) in Hebrew and *Eleos* (mercy), *Splagnizomai* (Compassion) and *Oiktirmos* (a readiness to help) in Greek. There are also other ethical concepts which are considered as elements of mercy. They are righteousness (Hos 12:6), Salvation (Ps 13:5), Peace (Jer 16:5), love (Jer 2:2), grace (Ex 33:19), faithfulness or truth (Jn 1:14) justice (Gen 39:21), and forgiveness (Ex 34:6). The term mercy implies both masculine and feminine aspects of God. *Hesed* and *Eleos* show the fatherly aspects of fidelity and love, while *Rahamim* and

³ In the book of Ruth God's presence is just like a bystander. There he says and does nothing. But his presence is felt very vividly.

⁴ John Paul II, *Dives in Misericordia*, no. 4.1

⁵ Walter Kasper, *Mercy: The Essence of the Gospel and the Key to Christian Life*, New York, Paulist Press, 2013, p. 18.

Splagnizomai indicate compassionate love which has a quality something like Motherly love.⁶

The term *hesed* is the most important expression for understanding mercy. It means unmerited loving kindness, friendliness, favour, and divine grace and mercy. It goes beyond mere emotion. It means God's free and gracious turning toward the human person with care. It expresses an unexpected and unmerited gift of God's grace which transcends every relationship of reciprocal fidelity.⁷ It is the unique Hebrew concept that briefly contains the themes of the narratives of the Bible. Its meaning is best understood in the context of familial and community bonds. It is because of *hesed* covenant is actualized between God and his people, for it is a committed, familial love that is deeper than social expectations, duties, shifting emotions or what is deserved or earned by the recipient. *Hesed* incarnates itself in action.⁸

2. Merciful God is a God who Acts

It is not the appearance of terms in the Bible reveals the mercy of God, but it is his actions. And if we make a research purely based on the appearance of the term we may also confront the reality that *hesed* does not always carry the significance as it has been traditionally defined. In Hos 6:6 God demands "I desire *hesed* (steadfast love) and not sacrifice". If we look into the original context of the demand of God we can realize that God is not speaking to Hosea of charitable deeds. Here *hesed* means 'loyalty,' rather than 'love' or 'mercy.' God is not concerned with the kindness that human beings should show to one another, but with the cultic fealty that Israel owed to Him.⁹ Yet the

⁶ Due to the limitations of the space allotted to me for the paper, here we deal only about the word *Hesed*. For more details about *Rahamim*, see Phyllis Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*, Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1978, p. 1-71.

⁷ R. Bultmann, "e:leoj", Gerhard Kittel (Ed), *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, p. 477-85

⁸ G.R. Clark, *The Word Hesed in the Hebrew Bible*, JSOTSup 157, Sheffield, p. 267.

⁹ Karen Armstrong, *The Bible: the Biography*, Atlantic Books, London, 2007, p. 83-84.

biblical narrators are convinced that God's merciful and saving love has its beginning in the very mystery of creation, which indicates God's genuine sustaining work in the daily existence of the human community. That is, God's *hesed* is evident in Israel, not primarily in the great dramatic public events, but in the ongoing process of life. In this process one can identify 'feminine' nature of God alongside 'masculine' assertiveness.

Even if one can argue that God's *hesed* is the loyalty that binds liege and vassal rather than any more tender or personal feeling, there is something more than loyalty underlies this relationship. For covenant love has been preceded by the more mysterious, gratuitous love that established the covenant in the first place. "It was not because you were more numerous than any other people that the Lord set his heart on you and chose you - for you were the fewest of all peoples. It was because the Lord loved you and kept the oath that he swore to your ancestors, that the Lord has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt." (Deut 7:7-8)

3. Merciful God is a God who Re-acts

If *hesed* is an action of God, it is precisely a *re-action* of God to someone else's suffering.¹⁰ Actually Bible is a book which narrates this *re-actions* of God. Now let us look into the *merciful re-actions* of God.

When God created the world he had a plan of well being and goodness of the world. Among the created he gave prime importance to the man, for God created man in His own image ... God ordered him to cultivate the garden and to look after it and to eat the plants and fruits from the garden, which symbolizes that his food should not be other living beings (In the biblical world plants are not considered as living being). He does not need to kill the life of other living beings for the perseverance of his life. All these indicate that the plan of God was a world without violence and blood. And it was a plan absolutely good... Chapters 1

¹⁰ Jon Sobrino, *The Principle of Mercy*, Orbis Books, New York, 1994, p. 16.

and 2 of Genesis can be called as the dream of God. But, instead, man mysteriously chooses the evil. He refuses God as his Father (Gen 3) and the brother (Gen 4). Here starts the revelation of humanity as well as the revelation of God's *hesed* as re-action.

3.1. *Mercy - Justice - Mercy*

In the story of Cain and Abel the narrator draws the picture of God's *hesed* and *mishpat* (justice) with same colours. Nobody knows why Cain's offering was not accepted by God. There were differences in the birth of these brothers, in their cult and even in their offerings. But all these differences are mentioned only in the external level. The internal difference is not mentioned at all. Still we see, from the part of God there is a different way of looking towards the offerings of these brothers. Why there is difference from the part of God is not explained. The text does not give any explanation to it, but leaves it to the realm of the mystery. Here we are in front of the mystery of the election, like he chose Israel by leaving other nations without any rational explanation. God chose the Israel for the salvation of all. He chose Abel for the good of Cain. In this sense choosing one does not signify neglecting the other.

The mode of love that God has to everyone is diverse from one another. This is the mysterious part of God's *hesed* as act. For every human being is diverse in his very existence. The existence comes from diversity. I exist because I am different from the other. My being or existence is loved by God. The question is whether he is loving my existence more or less. If one feels that I have been loved less by God, he can have a misunderstanding that God hates me. Here the root of the problem lies that one is not able to understand the diversity of the reality. The one who does not accept the diversity will value everything from one side view point, which is his own view point.

Cain did not accept diversity. He valued everything from his own part. Hence for him God was unjust to him. As a result, Cain became angry and his 'face fell down'. 'Face fell' is an expression of the sadness of the person. The fundamental problem of Cain was not Abel, but God. He had a 'feeling' that God did not love him. He thought the

refusal of his offering as a manifestation of hate towards him. His crisis was whether to accept or not to accept the love of God. Cain faces great temptation in his heart. Here in this context God intervenes to help him like a father who helps his son. We should notice that God did not at all speak with Abel. He does not do anything to Abel. He speaks and seeks to help only Cain. All these show God's *hesed* toward Cain. It is a re-action of *hesed* before the implementation of *mishpat*. But Cain lacks to see the *hesed* of God, and this lack of sight is manifested against his brother by killing him.

Now God intervenes in *mishpat*; 'Where is your brother?' The question is very similar to that which God asked to Adam in the garden, 'Where are you?' Here God searches the victim. Cain is asked to stand in front of his own responsibility. Cain is supposed to be responsible for his brother, for he is the first born. That is why God asks about Abel, his brother. But Cain refuses his own truth about his brotherhood and the first-born status. Cain responds, 'I do not know, am I my brother's keeper?' Now God's *mishpat* comes in to act. It is a re-action to the cry of the blood from the land. In this moment God curses the man. While man did sin against God in the garden he neither cursed man nor woman, but he cursed the serpent and the land. Now he curses the man, because of the blood of his brother.

God's *mishpat* opens the eyes of Cain. He cries for mercy. He understands the consequence of the sin is always unbearable and death is inevitable. He was afraid of others. In this situation God intervenes the third time. It was a re-action of *hesed*. God assures "Whoever kills Cain will suffer a sevenfold vengeance." And the Lord put a sign on Cain, so that no one who came upon him would kill him" (Gen 4:15). God protects Cain. The killer will not be killed. It is the salvific love of God.

The text of Cain and Abel reveals the peculiarity of the modus operandi of God. The principle behind God's action and re-action is *hesed* alone, without undercutting *mishpat*. In the story of Cain and Abel God's *mishpat* is enclosed by His *hesed*. In the Biblical world God's *hesed* protects His *mishpat*, and His *mishpat* guards His *hesed*.

3.2. *Hesed, the Absolute Criterion for Salvation History*

When we read the narration of the call of Abram in Genesis 12 we may see that God appears suddenly without an introduction. He calls Abram to leave his country, his clan, and his home, and journey to a land that He will reveal to him. The question here is this; what caused God to call Abram? Or, what was the situation of Abram before God's call? For this we need to analyse the genealogy of Tèrakh, the father of Abraham.

The account of Tèrakh begins with the information that he had three sons whom he named Abram, Nakhôr and Haran. The name Abram means 'Father, indeed elevated'. To the second son Tèrakh gave the name of his father; Nakhôr. It is a unique characteristic in the whole Genesis. Tèrakh honours his father after having proclaimed the eldest the elevation of himself as a father. The name of the third son of Tèrakh, Haran, is not suitable to associations of the kind. But the narrator juxtaposes his birth (v. 27b) with the fact that he generates a son and with his death 'before the face of Tèrakh, his father' (v.28). What we need to notice is this: Tèrakh became the father of Abram...(v.27a) and Haran became the father of Lot (v.27b), Tèrakh was still alive, but Haran died. The actions are the same, but the results are different. And the result is shocking. Is there place for only one father in the house of Tèrakh?

Abram and Nakhôr both got married. The names of their wives are mentioned, but the name of the wife of Haran is not mentioned in the narration. The wife of Nakhôr is one of his two nieces, the daughters of Haran and sisters of Lot: Milkah (Queen), whose sister is Yiskah (?). There appears a tendency to the domestic fusion here: Nakhôr does not come out of the clan to find his wife. But it is not the case with Abram that, instead of taking Yiskah, the other orphan niece, he chooses, out of the family, a woman named Saraï (My princess). Soon the narrator gives reliable information about Saraï; 'Now Saraï was barren; she had no child' (v.30). The narrator's formulation is curious. The adjective 'barren' follows a redundant expression 'she had no child.' This is the centre of the whole narration. It is a new situation of death.

Now Tèrakh takes everyone and sets a journey toward Canaan. Tèrakh exercises on them his dominance and puts his hand on their destiny. In other words, he does not let anyone to have their own clean initiatives. In short Tèrakh is a man who does not seem to live his fatherhood in accordance with the expressed ideal in Gen 2:24. He does not permit his sons 'to leave the father and mother' to live their own adventure. The narrator says, Tèrakh has a project: to go toward the land of Canaan. But unexpectedly, the journey interrupts itself. They arrive at Kharan, a place which is a paronym of Haran, the son died before the face of the father. Tèrakh and the place Kharan which recalls the extinct suggest that they have not left the starting point, because the situation of death remains. So something else is needed here. An intervention of God is necessary, the one that separates and differentiates. And God calls Abram from this background of death, barrenness and landlessness. Why did God call Abram and separated him? It was the re-action of God's *hesed* toward the primitive elements of death. It is purely the re-active principle of God's *hesed* lies behind the imperative and those series of four cohortative verbs that expresses emphatically the intention of God in Gen 12:1-3. "Paraphrasing Scripture, we might say that, as in the absolute divine beginning 'was the Word' (John 1:1), and through the Word creation arose (cf. Gen 1:1), so mercy is in the absolute beginning of the history of salvation, and this mercy abides as a constant in God's salvific process."¹¹

3.3. *Hesed* , the Re-action to Seeing and Hearing

God says to Moses at mount Hô'reb, "I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their suffering, and I have come down to deliver them from the Egyptians..." Here God reveals himself in an anthropomorphic manner. The verbs used here are of perception only. Classical Hebrew has abundant resources for the expression of emotion, and this passage declines to draw on them.¹² Yet, the question

¹¹ Jon Sobrino, *The Principle of Mercy*, p. 17.

¹² Jack Miles, *God: A Biography*, p. 238.

of choosing a term to describe this activity on God's part is the Hebrew verb *yadāh* (to know). When this verb refers to personal acquaintance, it implies love. The verb *yadāh* indicates God's interiorization of the suffering of the people. This interiorized suffering of people is the first principle and foundation of the re-action of God's *hesed*. Now onwards this *hesed* becomes the moulding principle of the whole action of God throughout the book of Exodus. And this is very clear in the self-declaration of God in Ex 34:6-7.

The self-declaration of God comes at a crucial moment in Israel's life with God. It was the moment of crisis in which Moses and Israel find themselves before the worship ill-conceived golden calf made by Aaron, to which YHWH responds in destructive rage (Ex 32:10). In 32:11-14 and 33:12-16, Moses intercedes with YHWH on behalf of Israel, parrying with Him. Moses insists that YHWH must go with Israel into the wilderness if there is to be any Israel. In response YHWH assures Moses that YHWH is marked by profound and free graciousness, and will act graciously according to His own free inclination. In an escalation of the bargaining with YHWH, Moses asks to see His glory (33:18). YHWH refuses the request, but offers to show Moses 'my back' (33:23). After that the 'Lord passed before him' (34:6). Nothing is said about Moses seeing YHWH, either front or back. Instead, 34:6-7 makes an announcement about the character of YHWH, out of which comes YHWH's resolve to continue the life of Israel by means of new covenant arrangement (33:10).

God's re-action as self-declaration is characterized by a cluster of terms that are synonyms to *hesed*. He reveals himself as *merciful*, gracious, slow to anger, abound in faithfulness and forgiving. This merciful face of God is beautifully sung in the Psalms, especially Ps. 136. It speaks of great wonders - such as, wonders of creation (vv.5-9), the deliverance from Egypt (vv.10-15), the wilderness sojourn (v.16) and the entry into the promised land (vv. 17-22) - in which God acted in infinite *hesed*.

4. Merciful God of Jesus

God of the New Testament is a Merciful Father who loved the world that he gave his Son (Jn 3:16). Indeed, God did not send the Son

into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him (Jn 3:17). That is why as par excellence for love Jesus teaches to “be merciful, just as your Father is merciful” (Lk 6:36). From Jesus the whole Old Testament tradition of God’s *hesed* receives its definitive meaning. Jesus embodies the Father’s love for humanity. He is the *hesed* of the Father to the humanity. From the very outset of his ministry, Jesus makes *hesed* a principal theme of his preaching, lifestyle and actions. Jesus is the visible sign of God’s tender love for weak and sinful humanity.

“Jesus is the face of God’s *hesed*,”¹³ for by his way of life and his actions, he makes the Father present as love and mercy. He personifies the *hesed* of Father and enfleshes it in the situations of everyday life. That is why he could tell Philip, “whoever has seen me has seen the Father” (Jn 14:9). At the same time Jesus demands that those who are beneficiaries of God’s *hesed* must “be guided in their lives by love and mercy.”¹⁴

The zenith of the biblical revelation of God’s *hesed* is manifested in the Paschal Mystery of Jesus’ Passion, death and Resurrection. During the torments of his Passion, Jesus deserved for mercy more than any other human being, but the Father did not spare His own Son. Jesus’ Passion and death demands a divine justice. But this justice, writes Pope John Paul II, is “to God’s measure”; it springs, “completely from love: from the love of the Father and of the Son, and completely bears fruit in love.”¹⁵ It is “a radical revelation of mercy.”¹⁶ On Calvary the revelation of God’s *hesed* reaches its apex. Eternal love touches the most painful wounds of humanity, showing love to be more powerful than sin.

By raising Jesus from the dead the Father again manifests His *hesed* toward Jesus and the world. Like sin, death, too kneels before the *hesed* of God. In the Resurrection, Jesus “experienced in a radical way mercy shown to himself, that is to say the love of the Father

¹³ Pope Francis, *Vultus Misericordiae*, No. 1.

¹⁴ Pope John Paul II, *Dives in Misericordia*, No. 3.6.

¹⁵ John Paul II, *Dives in Misericordia*, No. 7.3.

¹⁶ John Paul II, *Dives in Misericordia*, No. 8.1.

which is more powerful than death.”¹⁷ Moreover, through his Resurrection, “Christ has revealed the God of merciful love, precisely because he accepted the Cross as the way to the Resurrection.”¹⁸ The glorified Son is both the living embodiment of mercy received from the Father and its inexhaustible source for humanity.

Conclusion

Hesed is the term that appears in the positive side of the doxologies and complaints that dominates Israel's theological utterance. And we know that the doxologies intend to celebrate God's positive character and the complaints seek to mobilize it. Nobody wishes to celebrate and mobilize the second part of self-declaration of God in Ex 34:6-7. The negative part is not kept in purview as needed. Prophet Nahum in the harsh verbal attacks on Israel's enemy, Assyria, writes, “The Lord is slow to anger but great in power, and the Lord will by no means clear the guilty” (Nah 1:3). There are both positive and negative sides of the character of God. Is the positive side of God for us and the negative for others? “The God of steadfast love is no wimp, but will act in the service of God's own sovereignty, which in this case is to the enormous benefit of Israel.”¹⁹ So, what about the others? Do we need to expect the other side? God's characteristic of *hesed* can become problematic if we think as Jonah thought when God had forgiven the hated Nineveh when it repented. Jonah asks God, “O Lord! Is not this what I said while I was still in my country? That is why I fled to Tarshish at the beginning; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and ready to relent from punishing” (Jon 4:2). God is indeed steadfast and gracious.

Monastery of Our Lady of Mercy
Edakochi - P.O, Cochin - 682010
e-mail.: martinodem@gmail.com

¹⁷John Paul II, *Dives in Misericordia*, No. 8.7.

¹⁸John Paul II, *Dives in Misericordia*, No. 8.6.

¹⁹Walter Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament*, p. 220.

Index of Articles

- Bediuzzaman Said Nursi and the Nur Movement*, Leo D. Lefebure, Vol. 45, No. 269, pp. 37-49
- Catholic Tribal Movement*, Agapit Tirkey, Vol. 45, No. 269, pp. 50-63
- Clarion Call of Anuvratas – The Anuvrata movement*, Priyadarshana Jain, Vol. 45, No. 269, pp. 74-86
- Church in the Postmodern Cultural Process Today*, Kuncheria Pathil, Vol. 45, No. 268, pp. 67-82
- Consecrated Life as Counter-Culture: Historical Impulses for Its Reinvention Today*, Isaac Padinjarekuttu, Vol. 45, No. 267, pp. 26-44
- Consecrated Religious Life as a Contrast Society: Pieris Perspective*, Helen Dantis, Vol. 45, No. 266, pp. 32-45
- Current Agrarian Crises and a Response*, Joshy Cherian, Vol. 45, No. 268, pp. 24-30
- Discipleship in the Hebrew Bible*, James B. Dabhi, Vol. 45, No. 266, pp. 51-65
- Embedded Resonances as Latent Forms of Indigenous Christianities*, Gnana Patrick, Vol. 45, No. 265, pp. 55-63
- 'The Face of Mercy' and the Face of the Poor: Reflections on the Extraordinary Jubilee year of Mercy*, John Nellikunnel, Vol. 45, No. 270, pp. 7-21
- Fighting Corruption without Compromise*, Shaji George Kocuthara, Vol. 45, No. 268, pp. 31-47
- Flexible Communities of Spiritual Seekers*, Sebastian Painadath, Vol. 45, No. 267, pp. 57-74
- God's Hesed in the Bible: Word, Action and Reaction*, Martin Antony, Vol. 45, No. 270, pp. 58-69
- Globalization and Democracy: A Prophetic Call and Challenge to Religious Life*, Selva Ratinam, Vol. 45, No. 266, pp. 46-50
- Harikatha – A Socio Religious Movement*, N. Uma Maheswari, Vol. 45, No. 269, pp. 64-73
- Historical Background to Indigenous Christianities*, D. Arthur Jeyakumar, Vol. 45, No. 265, pp. 9-20

- Human Rights: Challenges and Opportunities for Church in India Today*, Varghese Theckanath, Vol. 45, No. 268, pp. 9-24
- Integral Theological Formation for Apostolic of Tomorrow in the Light of Vatican II*, Selva Ratinam, Vol. 45, No. 266, pp. 75-86
- Integrated Theological Formation Human /Personal, Intellectual Spiritual and Pastoral*, Philip Vysanethu, Vol. 45, No. 266, pp. 66-74
- Indigenous Church: A Pauline Response*, A John Baptist, Vol. 45, No.265, pp. 21-31
- Jesus and Consecrated Discipleship: The Mystical and Prophetic Dimension of Consecrated Life in the Indian Church*, P.R. John, Vol. 45, No. 267, pp. 9-26
- Lived Religion: India's Many Indigenous Christianities*, Rowena Robinson, Vol. 45, No.265, pp. 41-54
- Master Cheng Yen and the Buddhist Tzu Chi Compassion-Relief Foundation*, Elise Anne Devido, Vol. 45, No. 269, pp. 7-21
- Methodologies for the Study of Indigenous Christianity*, Paul Joshua Bhakiaraj, Vol. 45, No.265, pp. 32-40
- Meaning ad Significance of Consecrated Life as Women Disciples of Christ*, Shalini Mulackal, Vol. 45, No. 267, pp. 45-56
- Mirroring the Merciful God: An Exploration of Kasper's Relational Ontology*, Randy J.C. Odchigue. Vol. 45, No. 270, pp.38-57
- New Religious Movements in India : The Mata Amritanandamayi Math*, Qiu Yonghai, Vol. 45, No. 269, pp. 22-36
- Political Ambivalence of Indigenous Christianities: Analysis and Reflections on the Post-Denominational Age*, Felix Wilfred, Vol. 45, No.265, pp. 64-80
- Religious Fundamentalism and Role of Religion in Civil Society*, Saju Chackalackal, Vol. 45, No. 268, pp. 48-66
- Remembering Thomas Kochery*, Jacob Parappally, Vol. 45, No. 267, pp. 75-77
- Rooted in Christ to be His Emissaries: A Renewed Vision for Consecrated Life*, Fabi an, Vol. 45. No. 266, pp. 7-31
- Scripture, Virtue, Ethics, and Public Life: Justice and Mercy in Isaish 42/Matthew 12*, Robert Gascoigne, Vol. 45, No. 270, pp.22-37

Index of Authors

Antony Martin, *God's Hesus in the Bible: Word, Action and Reaction*, Vol. 45, No. 270, pp. 58-69

Bapist A. John, *Indigenous Church: A Pauline Response*, Vol. 45, No. 265, pp. 21-31

Bhakiaraj Paul Joshua, *Methodologies for the Study of Indigenous Christianity*, Vol. 45, No. 265, pp. 32-40

Chackalackal Saju, *Religious Fundamentalism and Role of Religion in Civil Society*, Vol. 45, No. 268, pp. 48-66

Cherian Joshy, *Current Agrarian Crises and a Response*, Vol. 45, No. 268, pp. 24-30

Dabhi James B., *Discipleship in the Hebrew Bible*, Vol. 45, No. 266, pp. 51-65

Dantis Helen, *Consecrated Religious Life as a Contrast Society: Pieris' Perspective*, Vol. 45, No. 266, pp. 32-45

Devido Elise Anne, *Master Cheng Yen and the Buddhist Tzu Chi Compassion-Relief Foundation*, Vol. 45, No. 269, pp. 7-2

Fabian, *Rooted in Christ to be His Emissaries: A Renewed Vision for Consecrated Life*, Vol. 45, No. 266, pp. 7-31

Gascoigne Robert, *Scripture, Virtue Ethics, and Public Life: Justice and Mercy in Isaiah 42/Matthew 12*, Vol. 45, No. 270, pp. 22-37

Jain Priyadarshana, *Clarion Call of Anuvratas – The Anuvrata movement*, Vol. 45, No. 269, pp. 74-86

Jeyakumar D. Arthur, *Historical Background to Indigenous Christianities*, Vol. 45, No. 265, pp. 9-20

John P.R., *Jesus and Consecrated Discipleship: The Mystical and Prophetic Dimension of Consecrated Life in the Indian Church*, Vol. 45, No. 267, pp. 9-26

- Kochuthara Shaji George, *Fighting Corruption without Compromise*, Vol. 45, No. 268, pp. 31-47
- Lefebure Leo D. *Bediuzzaman Said Nursi and the Nur Movement*, Vol. 45, No. 269, pp. 37-49
- Maheswari N. Uma, *Harikatha – A Socio Religious Movement*, Vol. 45, No. 269, pp. 64-73
- Mulackal Shalini, *Meaning and Significance of Consecrated Life as Women Disciples of Christ*, Vol. 45, No. 267, pp. 45-56
- Nellikunnel John, 'The Face of Mercy' and the Face of the Poor: *Reflections on the Extraordinary Jubilee year of Mercy*, Vol. 45, No. 270, pp. 7-21
- Odchigue Randy J.C., *Mirroring the Merciful God: An Exploration of Kasper's Relational Ontology*, Vol. 45, No. 270, pp. 38-57
- Padinjarekuttu Isaac, *Consecrated Life as Counter-Culture: Historical Impulses for Its Reinvention Today*, Vol. 45, No. 267, pp. 26-44
- Painadath Sebastian, *Flexible Communities of Spiritual Seekers*, Vol. 45, No. 267, pp. 57-74
- Parappally Jacob, *Remembering Thomas Kochery*, Vol. 45, No. 267, pp. 75-77
- Pathil Kuncheria, *Church in the Postmodern Cultural Process Today*, Vol. 45, No. 268, pp. 67-82
- Patrick Gnana, *Embedded Resonances as Latent Forms of Indigenous Christianities*, Vol. 45, No. 265, pp. 55-63
- Rathinam Selva, *Integral Theological Formation for Apostolic of Tomorrow in the Light of Vatican II*, Vol. 45, No. 266, pp. 75-86
- Rathinam Selva, *Globalization and Democracy: A Prophetic Call and Challenge to Religious Life*, Vol. 45, No. 266, pp. 46-50
- Robinson Rowena, *Lived Religion: India's Many Indigenous Christianities*, Vol. 45, No. 265, pp. 41-54

Shive Glenn, *The Oxford Handbook of Christianity in Asia* (Book Review), Vol.45, No.267, pp. 78-80

Theckanath Varghese, *Human Rights: Challenges and Opportunities for Church in India Today*, Vol. 45, No. 268, pp. 9-24

Tirkey Agapit, *Catholic Tribal Movement*, Vol. 45, No. 269, pp. 50-63

Vysanethu Philip, *Integrated Theological Formation Human / Personal, Intellectual Spiritual and Pastoral*, Vol. 45, No. 266, pp. 66-74

Wilfred Felix, *Political Ambivalence of Indigenous Christianities: Analysis and Reflections on the Post-Denominational Age*, Vol. 45, No.265, pp. 64-80

Yonghui Qiu, *New Religious Movements in India : The Mata Amritanandamayi Math*, Vol. 45, No. 269, pp. 22-36

1. The editorial board does not necessarily endorse the individual views of contributors.
2. Articles for publication should be sent to the respective section editors.
3. Books for reviews (two copies each), exchanges, queries should be addressed to the general editor.
4. Subscriptions are payable in advance.
5. Subscription generally starts with January / February issues.
6. Copies are sent by sea mail unless otherwise required. Air surcharges will be extra.
7. Please address your subscriptions to:

Jeevadhara
Malloosery P.O.
Kottayam - 686 041

Do not send it to anybody's name.

Those who send subscriptions by cheque are requested to add also Bank Commission (Rs. 20 - 25)

ADVERTISEMENT IN JEEVADHARA

The only space for ad in Jeevadhara is the back of its cover as a whole.

The new rates from this year on (2010) are: Rs. 3000 for once, Rs 2500x2 for twice and Rs. 1000 x 12 (with or without one or two) for the whole year.

RENEWED SUBSCRIPTION RATE

Indian	Rs. 150/- (Malayalam)	
	Rs. 200/- (English)	
Bangladesh	Rs. 400/-	
Foreign	(sea mail)	(Air mail)
	\$ 30	\$ 36 (Americas)
	EUR 25	EUR 30 (Europe)
	£ 16	£ 20 (England & Ireland)

Printed at K. E. Offset Press, Mannanam for Theocentre Press,
Kottayam - 686 041 and Published at Jeevadhara Office, Kottayam - 41
by J. Constantine Manalel

Registered No. KL/KTM/37/2015-2017 November 2015

R.N.I. No 22622 / 71

Annual subs. Rs. 200

Date of Publication

29-11 -2015

Back Numbers of Jeevadhara

**The Back Numbers of Jeevadhara
from 1971 to 2014 are available
at a Reduced Price till the end of the Year 2015:**

*(1) Those who come personally and buy on the
Spot at our Office:*

Rs. 10 per Copy (English)

Rs. 5 per Copy (Malayalam)

(2) Those who want copies to be posted to them:

Rs. 14 per Copy (\$ 3By Airmail (English)

Rs. 9 per Copy (Malayalam)

Contact Number: Tel. 0481 - 2392530

E-mail : jcmanalel@gmail.com